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Second Session, 41st Parliament

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 22 March 2017

Mercredi 22 mars 2017

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Greffier
Todd Decker



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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 22 March 2017 / Mercredi 22 mars 2017

Committee membership

Hon. Liz Sandals	2991
Motion agreed to	2991

Order of business

Hon. Liz Sandals	2991
Motion agreed to	2991

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Concurrence in supply

Hon. Liz Sandals	2991
Mr. Todd Smith	2993
Mr. Gilles Bisson	2995
Debate deemed adjourned	3001

Royal assent / Sanction royale

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller)	3001
--	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Michael Harris	3002
Mr. Percy Hatfield	3002
Mr. Harinder S. Takhar	3002
Mr. Victor Fedeli	3002
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong	3002
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	3002
Hon. Deborah Matthews	3002
Mrs. Gila Martow	3002
Mr. Granville Anderson	3002
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3002
Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris	3002
Mr. Arthur Potts	3002
Mr. Monte McNaughton	3002
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	3002
Mr. Bob Delaney	3002
Hon. Michael Coteau	3002
Miss Monique Taylor	3002
Mr. Yvan Baker	3002
Mr. John Vanthof	3002
Mme France Gélinas	3003

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Government advertising

Mr. Patrick Brown	3003
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	3003

Climate change

Mr. Patrick Brown	3004
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	3004
Hon. Glen R. Murray	3004

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns	3005
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3005

Hydro rates

Mr. Peter Tabuns	3006
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3006

Health care funding

Mr. Jeff Yurek	3007
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3007

Health care

Mme France Gélinas	3007
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3007

Great Lakes water quality / Qualité de l'eau des Grands Lacs

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	3008
Hon. Glen R. Murray	3008

Hydro rates

Mrs. Julia Munro	3008
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	3009
Hon. Glenn Thibeault	3009

Hydro rates

Mr. John Vanthof	3009
Hon. Glenn Thibeault	3009

Nurses

Ms. Soo Wong	3010
Hon. Eric Hoskins	3010

Hydro rates

Mr. Randy Hillier	3010
Hon. Glenn Thibeault	3010

Employment standards

Ms. Jennifer K. French	3011
Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn	3011

Indigenous economic development

Mr. Arthur Potts	3011
Hon. David Zimmer	3012

Highway improvement

Mr. John Yakabuski	3012
Hon. Steven Del Duca	3012

Water quality

Mr. Michael Mantha	3013
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	3013

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	3013
-------------------------------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala	3013
Mr. Granville Anderson	3013

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

NeighbourLink Chatham-Kent	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	3013
Teachers' labour dispute	
Mr. Wayne Gates	3014
Nutrition Month	
Ms. Soo Wong	3014
Credit unions	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	3014
Water quality	
Mr. Peter Tabuns	3014
Emma Harris	
Mr. Granville Anderson	3015
Bayfield	
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	3015
St. Patrick's Day	
Mr. John Fraser	3015
Water quality	
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	3015

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

Reliable Elevators Act, 2017, Bill 109, Mr. Dong / Loi de 2017 sur les ascenseurs fiables, projet de loi 109, M. Dong	
First reading agreed to	3016
Mr. Han Dong	3016
Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, 2017, Bill 110, Mr. Walker / Loi de 2017 modifiant la Loi sur les foyers de soins de longue durée, projet de loi 110, M. Walker	
First reading agreed to	3016
Mr. Bill Walker	3016

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	3016
Motion agreed to	3016
Private members' public business	
Hon. Yasir Naqvi	3016
Motion agreed to	3017

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Dental care	
Mr. John Yakabuski	3017
Invasive species	
Mr. Granville Anderson	3017
Hospital funding	
Mr. Bill Walker	3017
Employment standards	
Ms. Catherine Fife	3017
Home inspection industry	
Mr. Granville Anderson	3018
Hydro rates	
Mr. John Yakabuski	3018
Privatization of public assets	
Mr. Percy Hatfield	3018
Hydro rates	
Mr. James J. Bradley	3019
Long-term care	
Mr. Victor Fedeli	3019
Child care	
Mme France Gélinas	3019
GO Transit	
Ms. Ann Hoggarth	3019
Medical assistance in dying	
Mr. Monte McNaughton	3020

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, 2017, Bill 92, Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2017 modifiant la Loi sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires, projet de loi 92, Mme Hunter	
Hon. Mitzie Hunter	3020
Mr. Lorne Coe	3021
Ms. Catherine Fife	3023
Mr. Granville Anderson	3024
Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	3025
Ms. Jennifer K. French	3026
Third reading vote deferred	3028
Concurrence in supply	
Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn	3028
Mr. Victor Fedeli	3029
Ms. Daiene Vernile	3031
Mr. Michael Harris	3032
Mr. James J. Bradley	3034
Ms. Sophie Kiwala	3035

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 22 March 2017

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 22 mars 2017

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board, on a point of order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: First of all, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding changes to the membership of standing committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed? President?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees:

That on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, Mr. Vanthof replaces Ms. Fife; and

That on the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, Miss Taylor replaces Mr. Mantha.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board moves that the following changes be made to the membership of the following committees—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Agreed? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of the Treasury Board.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Liz Sandals: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice for the arrangement of proceedings for debate on concurrence in supply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed. President?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move that, notwithstanding any standing order, the order for concurrence in supply for the various ministries and offices, as represented by government orders 4 through 12, inclusive, shall be called concurrently; and

That when such orders are called they shall be considered concurrently in a single debate; and

Two hours shall be allotted to the debate, divided equally among the recognized parties, at the end of which time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the order for concurrence in supply for each of the ministries and offices referred to above; and

That any required divisions in the orders for concurrence in supply shall be deferred to deferred votes, such votes to be taken in succession, with one five-minute bell.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of Treasury Board moves that, notwithstanding any standing order—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon. Liz Sandals: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Transportation, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Energy, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; the Ministry of Education, including supplementaries; the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and the Office of Francophone Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Sandals has moved government orders 4 through 12, inclusive.

Ms. Sandals.

Hon. Liz Sandals: It's my privilege this morning to talk about concurrence in the estimates today. As every member knows, our fiscal year begins with the budget. Our budget for this year was titled Jobs for Today and Tomorrow and was introduced February 25, 2016. In the budget, we outlined our key spending priorities for this fiscal year, including investing in our people, our infrastructure and our economy, and building prosperity that we will all benefit from.

Concurrence represents the Legislature's approval of the estimates for a given fiscal year. This isn't proposed new spending; it is simply a step in approving spending already outlined in the budget. Today, we are discussing concurrence for the 2016-17 fiscal year. As part of

today's discussion on concurrence, I'd like to take a look at how our budget has impacted Ontario.

Like most jurisdictions around the world, Ontario was affected by the global economic recession of 2008-09. But in the face of that challenge, instead of cutting jobs and services, like the proposed 100,000 jobs that the Conservatives would have cut, we created a plan to build Ontario up. We chose to improve schools, strengthen health care and invest in modern infrastructure. We chose to support our business community in many ways so that it can rise to the challenges of a technology-driven global economy.

Our plan to invest in the future, take bold action and be innovative, is working. Not only has Ontario's economy continued to grow in an uncertain global environment, but our government has continued to exceed our balanced-budget goals. For the eighth straight year, we beat the deficit target in our budget projection. Our deficit is at \$1.9 billion, an improvement of \$2.4 billion over our 2016 budget projections. Our economy is supported by strong economic growth and a responsible approach to fiscal management.

Speaker, we will deliver a balanced budget for 2017-18. This is thanks to our government's investment in our economy, which is helping our businesses compete and create jobs for Ontarians. Just last week, members of this House heard that we reached a new threshold in job creation, with over 700,000 net new jobs created since the recession.

Looking at economic trends, it is clear we are in one of the most exciting periods of economic growth and job creation we've seen in a very long time. Our unemployment rate is down to 6.2%, which is the lowest in the last 10 years. We also just passed seven straight months of job growth, a number we haven't seen for 14 years. We are transforming Ontario for the future with our infrastructure spending and with investments in the economy.

We have been ensuring that we are creating the best value possible for taxpayers through our Program Review, Renewal and Transformation initiative, and through targeted government support for small and medium-sized businesses. Our Program Review, Renewal and Transformation initiative, or PRRT, is an ongoing fiscal planning and expenditure management approach that we are using to make sure government continues to work in the best way possible for the people of Ontario. Through this initiative, we are continuously reviewing government programs to make sure they are working in the most efficient way, with the greatest value for taxpayers.

0910

PRRT has been designed to look at how every dollar across government is spent, using evidence to inform better choices and improve outcomes. We are asking the following questions about each program and service:

- (1) Is it relevant?
- (2) Is it effective?
- (3) Is it efficient?
- (4) Is it sustainable?

This approach is transforming how programs are delivered and identifying how resources can be re-allocated to priority areas such as health care and education. We need to make every dollar count, which is why we are working across government to manage resources responsibly.

Through PRRT this past fiscal year, we have used the evidence we are gathering on programs to undertake a number of initiatives to transform and modernize program delivery. One such initiative is the work we have been doing to transform student assistance to make college and university more affordable, including making the average cost of tuition free for students with financial need whose family income is \$50,000 per year or less. We estimate that by transforming the way we fund student assistance, over 150,000 students across the province will have free average tuition.

Just think what that means to average Ontarians. That is a lot of students who might have avoided post-secondary education in the past because of the cost. Now they will know upfront that those tuition costs are covered by the Ontario government. We are removing a major hurdle that could have kept too many people from their dreams and their future opportunities. For the average Ontarian, our tuition plan will help open the door to jobs that will help build the future of Ontario, along with the higher wages that usually come with post-secondary education.

Changing the way we provide tuition support unlocks the potential of thousands of Ontarians that otherwise may not have had the opportunity. While individuals will benefit from this plan directly, Ontario as a whole will also benefit. Having a highly educated workforce brings investment from companies looking for employees that will be able to handle the challenges of a globalized economy. This means greater economic potential for Ontario in the future.

Our plan not only provides economic and social benefits, but enables students to focus on learning without having to worry about borrowing or repaying money for the privilege of a good education. Our tuition promise is just one way that we are helping Ontarians while building the economy of the future.

We have also been working to simplify how transfer payments to government partners are managed to support a more modern, efficient and effective government. Through our Transfer Payment Administrative Modernization Project, we are simplifying processes for both transfer payment recipients and government staff. Our changes will allow everyone to spend less time on administration and more time on delivering important services to Ontarians.

Another key piece of PRRT has been information and information technology modernization. The government's information and information technology systems, or I&IT systems, are the backbone of many public services, including OHIP medical claims and more than 200,000 online driver's licence renewals every year.

While the government's investment in information technology has remained relatively stable at \$1 billion

annually, we have steadily improved IT operations while managing significantly increased demand for more and new services over the past decade. Some places where we have found efficiencies are through negotiating better contract pricing, better management of fee-for-service consulting costs, consolidating data hosting operations and more efficient design and delivery of IT systems.

In the 2016 budget, we committed to achieve \$100 million in savings by 2020 through modernizing the government's information technology.

We are also making crucial investments in fostering a more innovative and dynamic business environment. One recent example of this is our commitment to the Ontario Small Cider and Small Distillery Program. This program will provide eligible businesses with support to grow and scale up their operations, including hiring more staff and purchasing new equipment. In short, it will help create jobs and boost economic growth across the province.

We have invested in innovative and forward-looking companies across Ontario, including those in the technology sector. Just two months ago, we announced a partnership, through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, with Guelph Manufacturing to invest in new equipment and expand its capabilities. In a competitive auto parts industry, it is these kinds of investments that help Ontario companies stay at the forefront of manufacturing. Our partnership with Guelph Manufacturing created 31 new jobs and retained 523 positions in Guelph. This expansion will allow Guelph Manufacturing to improve production efficiency and develop in-house design engineering to better meet the needs of their clients.

I'm proud that our government is making investments that expand local manufacturing, protect jobs and support communities. Another example, announced by the Minister of Economic Development and Growth late last year, was our investment in a new research and development lab in Ottawa. The \$1.5-million investment through the Eastern Ontario Development Fund will help establish a lab focused on developing software for cloud computing, analytics and business intelligence. The lab will also create more than 100 new jobs. This is just one example of how our government is helping to create jobs and diversify the economy by encouraging regional businesses to pursue innovation and new markets.

The Eastern Ontario Development Fund, which provided the support in the Ottawa area, along with the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, supporting Guelph and points west, have helped to create and retain more than 32,000 jobs and attract approximately \$1.58 billion in investment since 2013. Sectors that are benefiting from our development funds include advanced manufacturing, food processing, life sciences, information and communication technology, tourism and cultural industries.

Finally, we are also committing to transforming Ontario to a low-carbon economy. Our current \$325-million investment in the Green Investment Fund, a down payment on the province's cap-and-trade program, is already seeing results. It has helped businesses reduce emissions by supporting a clean-tech-innovation initia-

tive with a \$74-million investment. It has also invested \$92 million to help retrofit social housing, much of which is high-rise apartment towers built in the 1960s and 1970s, and which can use up to 25% more energy per square foot than a typical house.

We have also put in place a plan to ensure that funds raised from our cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse gas pollution will be invested in creating green jobs and helping people and businesses shift to a low-carbon economy. Through the greenhouse gas reduction account, every dollar from cap-and-trade will be invested in green projects and initiatives that reduce emissions.

Fighting climate change while supporting growth, efficiency and productivity is part of the government's economic plan to build Ontario up and deliver our number one priority: to grow the economy and create jobs. The investments made through the greenhouse gas reduction account will help secure a healthy, clean and prosperous low-carbon future, and transform the way we live, move and work. It will make our communities stronger and more sustainable for our grandchildren and their children.

0920

The investments I've outlined are just a few examples of how we have supported Ontarians through our budget. The estimates that lay out government spending are much more than just numbers on a page. They're an indication of our commitment to build Ontario up and to do so in a fiscally responsible way. Each line of the estimates represents an investment in Ontarians and in the future of Ontario.

I urge all members to support the concurrence of our province's estimates and support government spending that has already been transforming Ontario for the future. I urge all members to support concurrence so that spending on these critical public services can be approved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Prince-Edward Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you this morning.

I'm pleased to rise and talk about the concurrence of estimates this morning. We did have quite a session this past spring, and in the fall, in terms of issues that were handled by the committee. I want to address a couple of those issues that were specifically raised by me and other members from the official opposition that the government failed to substantively address in the committee hearings.

The first pertains to the separate line item for cap and trade on natural gas bills, which I know has become a concern for many, many customers of Union Gas and Enbridge because the OEB has ruled that they're not permitted to put this new tax on a line item on the bill.

The minister maintained during questioning at estimates committee, as he has in media scrums since, that he didn't have the power to direct the Ontario Energy Board to itemize cap and trade separately on bills. Evidence, though, was presented at committee by me and others demonstrating that the process by which the OEB

examined the separate line item issue should not have reached the conclusion that it ultimately drew.

The board received dozens of submissions on the separate line item—dozens—and only one submission, made by Environmental Defence, supported the position that the board ultimately came to. That submission was made by a group that has very, very close connections to the Premier's policy team.

In addition, an article that appeared at the same time by the *Globe and Mail's* Adrian Morrow outlined a view held by the Premier's chief of staff that opposed any visible indication on bills that special fees were being added for environmental measures. Clearly, there was evidence that this was orchestrated by the Premier's office and wasn't quite as arm's-length as maybe was indicated by the minister.

It's worth pointing out that the province's Independent Electricity System Operator as well made a submission to the Ontario Energy Board arguing that a separate line item should be applied to natural gas bills. This is the IESO that actually said there should be a separate line item applied to the gas bills. But, of course, when it comes to ignoring its own energy experts, this government has a pretty long and storied history of doing just that.

However, the minister's answers at committee for this remarkable series of coincidences were less than satisfactory for the committee's purposes. This is important because cap-and-trade figures are revenue for the government which is integral to their spending plans—integral to the work being done by estimates.

However, a secondary responsibility exists with any consumption tax as well; that is, to send a price signal so that consumers can adjust their behaviour and limit the amount of tax that they pay. In this case, in addition to limiting the amount of tax they would be paying, they would be limiting their carbon emissions, which is the whole purpose for cap-and-trade in the first place. This is kind of the point of the whole program: not just to return revenue to the government, but to reduce the consumption of carbon as well.

As I have stated, the minister's answers at committee were simply insufficient in this regard. Under Bill 135, the minister enjoys fairly broad powers with regard to directives that he can issue to the Ontario Energy Board under the umbrella of the long-term energy plan. This easily—easily—could have been one of them, and it would have made sense to everybody. The only justifiable reason which exists for not having done so is a desire to escape blame for an increase that they have imposed. It's an increase that's already being felt, Mr. Speaker. The member from Sarnia—Lambton, just a couple of weeks ago, showed me a bill from a greenhouse in his riding which showed the impact that cap-and-trade was having on their business.

The other problem with the minister's lack of transparency on this issue is that it creates a disparity in the sector. On the one hand, natural gas companies are forced to comply with energy board rulings. On the other hand, propane providers aren't required to itemize cap-and-

trade costs inside the delivery charges on their bills. So propane customers are actually seeing the cost of cap-and-trade on their bill. Why? Because propane providers aren't subject to OEB regulations. This is the kind of thing that happens when you make an absolute hash of the energy file. And we've seen that in Ontario, for sure.

If I could, I'd like to move on to one other issue that we had with the government information that was provided to estimates. In my own riding of Prince Edward—Hastings, there has been substantial concern about the process regarding a new hospital campus in Picton. The process has been ongoing for years and it's occurred at the same time as the government made severe reductions in the number of beds in the entire Quinte Health Care Corp., which operates the four hospitals in my region: in Quinte West, Trenton Memorial Hospital; Belleville General Hospital; North Hastings Hospital, in Bancroft; and Prince Edward County Memorial, obviously, in the county.

While I've written and questioned the minister about this issue in the past, I feel a need to once again stress the importance of this issue here in the House, not for any reason as pertains to the process. This spring, we were finally able to get assurance, after years of trying, that the government was letting the county proceed to the next phase of development in the project for a new hospital, which is great news. Now, the government did send a backbench member into my riding to make this announcement and waited until the absolute last minute, of course, to inform my office that this was going to be happening. I don't hold the member responsible, but I have become accustomed, as I know others have, to this kind of treatment by the government.

I do, however, believe the issue can highlight what happens when members have their non-House interactions with the government disregarded as part of the government's response to their advocacy. I raised Quinte Health Care and its sites with the minister in committee, and then I was shocked when the minister stated in the House, in response to a question, that he never heard from me on this issue before.

Now, credit to the minister: He and I did patch up this disagreement, but the basic point remains. My colleague from Nepean—Carleton had a similar kind of issue last month when she underwent considerable correspondence with the government about the opioid crisis in her community. She heard nothing back from the government until a member on the backbench raised a question on the issue during question period. I raise this issue only to make a point: that just because events take place outside of the times when we're all on camera here in the Legislature, that doesn't give anyone in this place an excuse to pretend other members aren't doing their job.

Finally, I'd like to bring up another incident from estimates hearings last fall that has a direct bearing on the discussions currently under way in this House. When the Minister of Education was before the committee, she was asked about a statement made by the ministry in the estimates briefing book, that the majority of increases in costs

in education were reflected in the increases in operating costs, specifically utilities. When the minister was asked about that statement in committee, we were once again presented with answers that just weren't satisfactory.

School boards in my riding have seen electricity costs increase over a million dollars over the last two years. What we now know is that schools and school boards will receive almost no benefit from the government's electricity scheme that they released a couple of weeks ago. Depending on how the IESO works out the "high five" problem, with the expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative, the ICI, it's entirely possible that an ever-shrinking pool of ineligible electricity users are going to end up carrying a greater percentage of the remaining global adjustment costs. So you can see the concern here, Mr. Speaker. It's a concern that we don't see reflected in the current year's estimates, though last year's substantial increase in electricity rates—driven by the policies of this government—will no doubt be reflected in the estimates briefings that members are provided with in just a few weeks' time.

0930

These are just a couple of the issues raised at committee that need to be addressed by the government. There were a lot of questions that went unanswered. We were stonewalled in committee in trying to get the information with respect to many areas of concern to our constituents. We're not entirely satisfied with the way that estimates played out in the spring and fall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got a number of comments I want to make in regard to the concurrence in supply motion. I'll come back to the actual process of concurrence in supply after, but I want to speak to the ministry estimates.

First of all, on aboriginal affairs, I just want to touch on a couple of things before I get to energy and a few of the other ministries covered. I am glad to say this morning—this is being announced for the first time here in the House today. You will know that the reserve at Kashechewan has been working for years to get an agreement to move its community from the lowlands—where it is flooded almost every year, and the community is behind a dike—to move it upstream.

Chief Leo Friday, who was the chief in the previous administration, had gotten an agreement with the federal government, along with Charlie Angus and myself, in regard to the Kash water crisis. That sort of went astray when the Tories came to power. The Conservative government dragged their heels on this thing. Nothing ever got done. Our friend Leo Friday is back as chief again. Along with his council, Murray Trusler, Charlie Angus and others, they have been working toward getting an agreement with the federal government.

I'm glad to say that we actually have that agreement. We're going to be moving toward signing an agreement in order to move the community from the lowland behind

the dike and to move it upstream, where it should have been built in the first place.

Two comments on that: They told you that when they built the community, oh, federal government. Why they ever built a community in a flood zone is beyond me. Everybody who lived in the area understood it was a flood zone. Of course, they wouldn't listen to the First Nations because colonial governments are smarter and know better. They built them in a flood zone.

What was worse—and I'm laughing because you kind of have to laugh because otherwise you'd cry—is that the solution was to put a dike around the community. When they started flooding the community, rather than move the community like we did in Peawanuck when there was a flood there, 25 years ago now, what they ended up doing was building a dike around the community, so the entire community lives in a dike.

For the people of Holland, that might be normal, but for the people of the James Bay, let me tell you, living behind a dike doesn't do a lot for somebody's mental health and somebody's feeling of trying to be in touch with the land and enjoying the experience of what it is living in northern Ontario.

My congratulations to all those who have worked on that, and specifically Leo Friday, our chief in Kashechewan, who has been dogged on this thing from the beginning.

The second thing on the aboriginal components of the concurrence in supply, and I want to say this because I mentioned it at another meeting yesterday: This government is causing more confusion on the First Nations file when it comes to everything—how First Nations interact with mining, forestry, energy, agriculture—than has been seen in a long time.

There are some good intentions where the government says some nice words. They say they believe that we need to give First Nations the respect that they deserve—says the government; believe in the duty to consult, as per the Constitution of Canada; and believe that First Nations should be front and centre when it comes to any decisions made that affect their people or the traditional territories.

Those are the words spoken by the government. Those are words, Mr. Speaker, that you or any other members of the assembly would agree with. But the reality is that the action of what is really happening down there, at the levels of the ministries from issue to issue, is quite the contrary. The government is not providing real leadership.

I'll give you an example, just on the duty to consult. When the Supreme Court handed down its decision, it said, "There is a constitutional requirement that governments consult with First Nations when it comes to issues that affect them and their territories." This government's approach is to say, "Well, private sector, go and consult."

If you're a mining company, a forestry company, wanting to develop a campground or whatever it might be, your responsibility from the private sector is to go out and do the consultation for the government. That's not what the duty to consult is all about. That might be part of it. I don't argue that there isn't a role for the private

sector developer to be involved in some way; after all, they're the ones doing the investment. But we as a province have a responsibility to drive that process to make sure that in fact there are real, meaningful consultations taking place and there are policies in place in order to ensure that those consultations mean something.

For example, if we look at what happened in the Ring of Fire—or, I should say, what didn't happen in the Ring of Fire—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Or what didn't happen.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —as my good colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin would know—we had an opportunity to develop the primary chromite deposit in the world, at a time when commodity prices were high and demand was high. It was just the perfect alignment to be able to raise the dollars necessary to build what would have been a huge operation in the Ring of Fire and for Ontario to be in the refining business, making not only steel but stainless steel, putting Ontario on a really good economic footing when it comes to the steel, stainless steel and mining industry.

This government, because it didn't take seriously its responsibility when it comes to the accommodation for the duty to consult and to do what needed to be done by way of First Nations, said, "Private sector, you go out and do it." So Cliffs resources, Noront, KWG and a number of other people went out there trying to, in their own way—I think of Frank Smeenck and the work that he has done and the millions of dollars he has spent trying to consult with First Nations in order to come to some sort of an agreement and a scheme that would give them a real, positive role in this Ring of Fire. He was never able to get there because he could never get the provincial partner to do what needed to be done, because the provincial government seemed unwilling, confused or paralyzed—I'm not quite sure which; probably a little bit of all—when it came to really making some key decisions in order to allow companies like KWG, Cliffs resources, Noront and others to go forward with their projects.

So all of these players were spinning their wheels trying to make something happen. They wanted to develop mines. The First Nations wanted mining developed but wanted to be fairly compensated, and they wanted to make sure there was economic impact for them that would be positive. The environmental people wanted to make sure, rightfully so, that we protect our environment. Instead, nothing happened. So Cliffs resources walked away. They walked away from what is the richest chromite deposit in the world and sold it to Noront for, what, \$26 million or something like that?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was like selling your house for a thousand bucks. They were so frustrated with the process, they walked away.

My point, as it relates to concurrence in supply, is that it's because the government didn't really understand, was confused or was unable to come to what decisions they had to make when it came to what needed to be done to make these developments go forward.

As a New Democrat, I will tell you what needs to happen; it's not very complicated. Number one, deal with revenue sharing. Say that for any new mining, forestry or any resource economic activity that takes place on traditional territory, there will be a sharing of resources when it comes to the taxation that we collect—income tax, sales tax, whatever taxes that come from the activity of that mine. It would be a percentage of money that would go to First Nations. Then we would say to the federal government, "You do the same."

Imagine that we put 15% or 20%, as the amount of money that we would share as a province, towards those projects, and the federal government does the same. We would then say, "First Nations, come to the table." They would come running to the table, because finally there would be a government prepared to put something on the table, willing to negotiate, so that they could determine, number one, if that is a fair number, and they could then determine how they want the money divvied up within their own communities. That's not a decision we, the government, have to make; it's a decision First Nations has to make. Will it be regional? Will it be partly regional and community shares—all of that? That's for them to work out. But once you put the money on the table and the concept that revenue sharing will be there, that makes a lot of things happen.

The other one is that we need to deal with land use planning. Government did—what the heck was that thing called? The Far North Act. I laughed when they did it; now I laugh again, because if not, I will cry.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It was a nice paper exercise.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, it was a beautiful paper exercise. Rick Bartolucci announced it with great fanfare, the Far North exercise, where we were going to have a great plan to develop the north. Fifteen years later, we're no further ahead than we were when they announced it.

Mr. Michael Mantha: We're further north.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're further north, exactly. The paper has gone further north. You can't find it.

0940

The point is that if you were serious about developing these projects, you would put a land use planning process in place that gives First Nations a place at the table and a real say about how development is going to happen in their traditional territories.

Mr. Speaker, you are on the municipal council of Stoney Creek. Can you imagine if the province said, "We're going to determine all the planning in your community and you as a councillor and a community member don't have anything to say"? What would you do? You'd say, "Get out of my community." What do you expect First Nations to say?

We never, never decided, the provincial government—I would say, the Liberals—never decided, for whatever reason—unable, incompetent; I don't know what it is—but couldn't deal with revenue planning. A 15-year process with the Far North Act, and we're no further ahead today than we were 15 years ago.

It's not complicated. Give them a seat at the table. We need to figure out, when it comes to land use planning,

the roles of the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, MNR and forestry, and possibly agriculture. We need to carve out of those ministries some sort of administration where we set up a body that includes First Nations that are the ones that do the permitting and make the decisions around policy and recommendations to the government. Those are the two biggest components.

If the government had been serious, there would be a mine—not one; I would argue at least two mines—at least two mines running up in the Ring of Fire today, and literally thousands of jobs. It means that if we were smart as a province, we would have said, “We will do this, O Private Sector, including building infrastructure to the Ring of Fire—road, rail and hydro—in exchange for making sure that we develop a stainless steel industry in Ontario where communities like Hamilton or Sault Ste. Marie, wherever there is steel manufacturing, could participate in making stainless steel.”

Why should you mine chromite in the Ring of Fire in Ontario, pack it up as lumpy ore—because that’s what they do with it; it’s lumpy ore—and then ship it to China?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Only to buy it back.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Only to buy it back; exactly—a good point from the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. It’s ridiculous. But if we would have done those things, the people of Sault Ste. Marie or Hamilton would have a manufacturer of stainless steel. People in northern Ontario would have mining jobs. The financial district in downtown Toronto would be doing the economic activities that it takes in order to support that type of infrastructure investment and mining investment in a place in northern Ontario called the Ring of Fire. You’re literally talking billions of dollars when you open a mine like that. This is not a \$100-million manufacture of something being built somewhere in southwest, southeast or central Ontario. You’re talking billions of dollars. That’s what these projects are. They’re huge, and you can do them in a sustainable way.

I’ll give you a good little example: Detour Lake opened up a gold mine north of Cochrane in my riding. It’s not in John’s riding, by the way; it’s in mine. They opened the gold mine there some years ago, I would say—30-plus or 35 years ago. They operated that mine for 10 or 15 years. It was, I believe, Dome Campbell mine that operated it.

When the mine came to its end, the underground, the mine was shut down. As a result of the shutdown, the mine closure act that the NDP government passed while in power said, “That place has to be rehabilitated to, as close as possible, the condition that existed there before the mine was built.” They took out the head frame. They took out the mill. They took out all of the facilities that were there to operate the mine. They took out the hydro lines. They took everything out. They covered up the tailings.

I always remember that there was a—I won’t say who this environmentalist was, but a very well-known en-

vironmentalist to all of us down here some years ago said, “Gilles, it’s terrible what they are doing in mining. Look at these pictures.” He was showing me pictures of tailings that used to take place in places like Timmins and Kirkland Lake years ago, which were real disasters. But governments over the years, and my government—in 1991, I believe it was—did the mine closure act so that this kind of thing doesn’t happen. I said, “Tell you what. As you know, I’m a pilot. I have an airplane.” This person wanted to go to Moosonee for something. There was a powwow going on. It was the summer Cree fest up in Moose Factory. I said, “Jump in the plane with me. I’ll bring you up.”

So we fly up, and on the way up I go flying over the Detour Lake gold mine. I said, “Hey, what do you see down there?” He said, “Oh, God, is it ever beautiful. Look at that. Oh, boy, is it ever nice. Look at that lake.” I said, “Do you know what you’re looking at?” He said, “What?” I said, “That’s the Detour Lake gold mine. It’s no longer there. It’s out. It’s gone.” The whole place had been rehabilitated. What used to be the tailings was grass. He thought it was swamp, but really it was grass.

Guess what’s there now, Mr. Speaker? A 60,000-tonne-a-day mine, open pit operation, employing about 800 direct jobs, and the rest contractors and everybody else who is there. We’ve now gone back in and mined it again.

But the point is, there are ways of doing it sustainably. If this government was serious about economic development for this province, you would look at northern and rural Ontario not as a drain and not as a place that, “Oh, my God, there they go; they need something again.” They should look at us as the economic drivers of Ontario. Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie, Kitchener-Waterloo and every place in between, from eastern Ontario to southwestern Ontario, thrive when the rural and northern parts of this province are able to do the things that they do best, and that’s agriculture, mining, forestry and those activities that generate wealth. That’s what this government should do.

Let me move on to the energy component of this because, obviously, we want to talk about energy. Oh, my God. All right. So let’s remember what happened here. I listened to the government when it comes to their speeches in the House about electricity: Oh, they inherited a system; oh, my God, nobody ever invested in electricity generation or transmission in the world before Dalton McGuinty. What hogwash. Every government since Adam Beck has been investing at what used to be Ontario Hydro, to make sure that we had a generating capacity necessary to produce the electricity needed for the Ontario economy and the people of Ontario. We determined in this Legislature that you needed about 25,000 megawatts of electricity to be able to meet the needs of Ontario. First of all, we built the system. It was a public system. You know what was interesting—as you know, Mr. Speaker, as a New Democrat—we generated electricity at cost and we were one of the cheapest places to buy electricity in North America.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You had a \$34-billion debt.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, but—the old Hydro; you’re the guy who privatized it so I understand you don’t like this part. I know the Conservatives don’t like it. But you’re the guys who privatized it so—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, that was quite an exchange. I’m glad I wasn’t part of it. That won’t happen again. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My point is that we in this Legislature—successive governments—built Hydro One in order to generate 25,000 megawatts of power at the best rates possible across North America so that we can meet the needs of Ontarians and industry. What ended up happening is that, first of all, the Conservatives under—not Mike Harris, actually—Ernie Eves moved towards the first parts of privatization of the system. That’s why my honourable colleague, the member from Simcoe—Grey, was so agitated, as a Conservative. It was his government that started the privatization. So I take it, the inference by that heckling is that when you say that you are opposed to what the government is doing in hydro, you won’t take back Ontario Hydro and stop the privatization; you’re not willing to bring it back into public hands? Okay, that’s good. Now we know what part of your policy is.

What ended up happening, which is the real reason why we pay a whole lot for electricity, is the Liberals came to power and said, “We need to build all this new generation,” at a time that demand was going down. They looked at the graph, demand was going down, and the Liberals decided to add supply. So we went from a 25,000-megawatt system to about a 37,000-megawatt system, most of which, 90% of it, was built in the private sector—signed contracts that were worth two and three times the price that it cost us as a province to generate electricity. And they wonder why we pay so much for electricity. You don’t have to be a genius to figure this out. We oversupplied the system.

Now, here is what’s really funny about this—again, it’s so funny because otherwise I’d cry. We’re using public assets such as the Mattagami River basin generating stations. We have a number of them in the Mattagami River basin that generate about 1,100 megawatts when they’re turned on. Guess what we do with those brand new generators that we spent \$2.2 billion or \$2.4 billion to build? Most of the time, they are running as motors. Do you know why, Speaker? Because we have to buy more expensive electricity from the private contracts that we signed with the electricity sector. In order to be able to buy their electricity, because we’re contracted to do so—there is so much electricity on the grid. You just can’t switch this stuff off at times. You have to balance the loads. It’s called leading and lagging power factors. As an electrician, I can get into a whole discussion on this. But we turned our generators into motors in order to balance the load. We have really expensive induction reaction processes on the system, because the Liberals have all this private power that’s online. So when I hear the government get up in this place and say, “Oh, my

God, there was nobody investing in power in this province. Thank God we came here, because we modernized the system”—listen, every government, from the time of Adam Beck to the time that Dalton McGuinty got elected, was investing in hydro, was doing what had to be done. Do you remember the various generators that were put online? Darlington was put online. Bruce was put online. It’s not as if nothing ever happened, but it was a planned system of 25,000 megawatts.

0950

Now we’re oversupplying the system and we’re having to pay for electricity we don’t need at two and three times the price because the Liberals locked us into these contracts. Now Kathleen Wynne, after the NDP, starting with Howard Hampton—this is how long this goes back. I was in this Legislature with you, Mr. Speaker, in opposition, when Howard Hampton was the leader and said, “Are you guys nuts? Do you know what you’re doing? You’re going to be driving up the price of electricity.” Everybody said, “Aw, you’re a New Democrat. What do you know? You don’t know nothing about that. Come on, Howard. Come on. Stop it. You’re making all this stuff up.” Well, jeez, it turns out that Howard’s problem was he peaked too early. He figured this out way back at the beginning when the announcements were made. It turns out that he was right and New Democrats were right. You can’t oversupply the system, pay two and three times the price on the private power and expect the price not to go up. So the price has gone up and people are mad. Kathleen Wynne, all of a sudden, who is part of the government that allowed this to happen, signed the cabinet documents in order to cancel—remember those—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, remember the scam Mississauga power plants? She was right in the middle of it.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no. I was in government. I listened to the Liberals: You’re so factually incorrect; you believe your own spin. I was part of a government that came in when David Peterson signed a bunch of these private contracts. We ended up negotiating our way out of them and going ahead with the ones that we had to, because we recognized that oversupplying the system in 1990 was a bad idea.

You guys oversupplied the system at two and three times the price. Now, all of a sudden, because the public is waking up to, “Oh my God, my hydro bill. Honey, did you see? My God, I can’t buy groceries this month”—literally, we have that in our areas.

If you live in rural or northern Ontario and you’re not on a gas pipeline—because there are, believe it or not, places that don’t have natural gas in Ontario—and you have to pay electricity to heat your house, your bill is about, in January, what, \$800 to \$1,200 a month—it depends on the size of your house, the heating system and the insulation—where they used to pay maybe \$400 in the winter.

If you go on a budget of \$400 a month to \$1,200 a month, guess what’s going to happen? People can’t pay

their bills. We have disconnections going all over. The government's response was, "Well, let's do legislation to stop the disconnections in winter." I guess that's a good thing. I'm not going to argue against it. But the very fact that we had to do it points to the bad policy that the government created.

Then the government said, "Oh, but we've got the ICI program in order to lower the price to the large producers such as paper mills, steel mills and all those people. We'll have the ICI program to allow them to cut their energy costs." The fact that you had to create a program to mitigate the price of electricity says your price of electricity policy was bad. You can't use that as a flag of pride and great accomplishments on the part of the Liberals. You drove up the price of electricity, and in order for them not to close their doors, you had to invent a program to reduce their hydro bills so they didn't close their doors. What a success. Maybe you shouldn't have done what you did in the first place by oversupplying the system.

Now the Premier says, "I have learned my lesson. People in Ontario are hurting and we're going to do something about it, because I care. I'm Kathleen Wynne."

Mike, have you got a credit card? Give me your credit card.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Have you got a credit card? Give it to me.

So they took a credit card, and they essentially refinanced the debt of building this over-generation that they did, because like the OPG projects and others, we've had to pay to build those. We've oversupplied the system, so they said, "Take out a clean credit card and re-finance the cost over a longer period of time. The money we're going to save on a monthly basis as a result of extending the debt for a longer period of time—we're going to pass on to savings." That's like you going home and saying, "Honey, we're having a hard time trying to balance the budget this month. Rather than making the mortgage payment, why don't we take the mortgage payment that's now 10 years and stretch it out to 30?" That's essentially what they've done. Or: "Let's take the mortgage payment and put it on the credit card." That's essentially what they've done. Well, at one point, you've got to pay for that, and you're going to pay more, because guess what happens when you amortize the cost over a longer period of time? Your monthly payment goes down but the overall cost goes up. Somebody's going to have pay this.

Now, am I going to argue that we don't have to find relief for people when it comes to hydro bills? Absolutely not. Something has got to be done. At least if this government had said, "Okay, we're doing this as a temporary measure, but we recognize that privatizing Hydro One is a bad idea and we're going to stop. We're going to do things that are permanent when it comes to restructuring hydro, such as why do we have five agencies where we used to have one?" We used to have Hydro One; now we have hydro five. We have five different agencies: OPG, Hydro One, IESO, A, B, C, D, E, F—we've got them all.

Mr. Michael Mantha: E-I-E-I-O.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: E-I-E-I-O.

All these people need CEOs, and guess what? Because they're running them like private corporations, they've got to pay them private corporation wages: "Give the guy four million bucks." The President of the Treasury Board says, "But that's not bad. Don't worry. I froze his wages." God, you can freeze mine at \$4 million any day.

But, no, the government doesn't make any of those changes. The government doesn't look at how we put the genie back in the box here and get away from these multiple organizations that we now have, which the Tories created when they started this privatization initiative. Why don't we undo that and go back to a sane system like we had before, where Hydro One had a CEO and, in today's wages, got paid about \$400,000 a year? You had people who were actually there in order to work at delivering electricity at cost, because that was the purpose of Sir Adam Beck.

When you look at Sir Adam Beck and what electricity prices were at the time, it's the same story. There were a bunch of little, private generators out there that were charging competing amounts for electricity to supply the market, and the market conditions allowed them to jack up the electricity prices. It's a little bit of a different scenario than today; now it's the government that jacks up the price with the contracts. But the point is, it didn't work. So Sir Adam Beck, in the wisdom of the day, said, "Let's create one crown corporation." We ended up calling it Hydro One. We provided electricity at cost to the people of Ontario: the cost it takes to generate, to transmit, to distribute and to have enough money to keep the infrastructure working. People paid a lot less for electricity.

I just say to the government across the way, your hydro plan is not a plan; it's a credit card. It's amortizing over a longer period. It's like everybody who has a mortgage in Ontario has just added 10, 15, 20 years to their mortgage payment. Yes, the monthly payment goes down. There's an initial saving; I get it. But it means to say that you're going to pay more for your house. That's what this means.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You may not have a house.

The other thing—this is the one that really got me: Then we're going to transfer the debt onto our children and grandchildren. The Premier actually got up and said that. I couldn't believe it. I've been a member of this assembly since 1990. I remember when the debate used to be, "What are you doing? You're going to be saddling our children with the debt." The Conservatives and Liberals, rightfully so, would get up and rail against any debt—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I'm going to get to that in a minute—in the sense of making sure that you only borrow what you need, and if you borrow too much, you're going to be saddling another generation. The Premier got up and wore it as a badge of honour. She said, "I have grandchildren," and named the names of her grandkids and her wonderful kids. I know her daughter. She

used to live up the lake from me at Kamiskotia Lake—a wonderful person. Her son-in-law is from Moose Factory; I know who he is. They're great people; no disrespect to them. But she named the names of the kids and said that it's only fair that they pay. I don't want Nathaniel, Victoria, Ellisa and Eva to pay for my mistakes. Do you want your grandchildren, Mr. Yakabuski, the member for Renfrew—

Interjection: Nipissing.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Nipissing—Pembroke—hey, I got there, Speaker. I figured it out.

I'm sure my good friend Mr. Yakabuski does not want to saddle his grandchildren with any debt. Would you take the mortgage payment in this House and say, "I'm going to take my mortgage and extend it so my kids and my grandkids can pay the mortgage so I can afford to live for less?" None of us would do that. Why is this government doing it?

1000

Andrea Horwath, prior to this plan that the Liberals call a plan, actually said what we would do: We would change distribution costs so that people paid a fair distribution cost. You wouldn't be penalized because you lived in rural and northern Ontario. Government has taken part of that, I understand. But that was part of the first part of the plan.

Get rid of that time-of-use pricing. I'll tell you, you are going to drive me crazy, the guys across the way, the Liberal government. Like most of us here, you either fly back or drive back to your riding Thursday night or Friday morning, depending on connections. I get there. I go out to the lake. I've got to do my laundry. But I can't do my laundry, because during the day I'm going to run the dryer at twice the price, so I can't put anything in the dryer while I go off to constituency appointments and meetings. I have to wait till I get back at 7 o'clock. But what are you doing at 7 o'clock on a Friday or Saturday night? Members, you're at an event somewhere. None of us are home at that time.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: All day Saturday, but not Sunday.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, but all of us, I'm not—listen, Friday—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay. Remember me, folks. You've got to go through me. Go ahead.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, all of us are out at events. You get home; you fly into the riding in the morning. I can't turn on my dryer at the time that I actually go. Why? Because if I turn it on, I'll pay double the price. I can't do it on Friday night or Saturday night because I'm out at events. So I end up running my dryer when I get in at 12 o'clock, 1 o'clock in the morning, 10 o'clock at night, depending what time I come back from the events.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Okay, I may have to move along here to that favourite initial "W," so let's cut it now.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, you meant Windsor, favourite "W," right?

So I just say, it's totally an unpractical approach to how people utilize electricity in their homes. The minister across the way says, "Oh, well, invest in new technology." People can't invest in the technology they've got. If the washer breaks, they can't call the repair man to fix the timer on their washer. Why do I know that? Somebody called me last week, one of my neighbours, and said, "Hey, my washer is not working anymore. Can you come over and look at it?" I said, "Fred the appliance guy lives up the road." The person said, "I don't have the money; I can't afford it." So I went over and looked at it and got it going for them.

But the point is, people can't afford new technology, can't afford what they've got now. It would be one thing if the government had an approach where they say, "Hey, listen, if you're prepared to invest in new technology, we'll help you out." That's a welcome debate; I don't have a problem with that. But, my oh my, the government's approach is to jack the price up, and that way it will force you to invest in the technology with money you don't have.

I just want to come back to the debt thing for one second. I listened to the Conservative member over here make comment about debt and Bob Rae. I saw a wonderful tweet this morning by Goldstein, who talked about how Ontario is now at \$300 million in debt—

Mr. Michael Harris: Billion.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Did I say "million"? Oh, sorry. I apologize—billion. As the guy used to say, billions in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Come on, folks. We're talking to each other. Okay? You do it again and I won't accept it. Go.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry about that, Speaker. But the point is that the article this morning was that Ontario has \$300 billion in debt and the federal government has \$600 billion in debt. Here is the irony of it: 90% of it caused by Liberals and Tories. They have the gall to point at Bob Rae? I was there. The first year, if David Peterson would have been elected and done nothing—he had a \$9.5-billion debt. That is the truth of it. We added to the debt by \$2 billion in anti-recession programs.

So the point is, a very small part of the overall debt of Ontario was caused by when we were in power for four and a half years; 95% of it has been Liberal or Conservative governments, if you haven't noticed. On the federal side, unfortunately, we haven't had the honour to be serving as government, so the \$600 billion in debt is entirely Liberals and Tories. When I hear the right-wing media, or Tories and Liberals, trying to talk to us about debt, I just sort of shake my head.

I tell people this story. This is one of my favourite stories to illustrate it. Tommy Douglas: Remember that man? He was voted the greatest Canadian in the history of Canada. He was the Premier of Saskatchewan, a New Democrat—CCF at the time. I say to people, "What's the first thing Tommy Douglas did when he was elected Premier of Saskatchewan?" People say, "Health care."

Nope, it wasn't the first thing he did. You know what he did? He balanced the books. The Liberals had left the province almost bankrupt. They couldn't even borrow money to operate day-to-day in Saskatchewan at the time. The NDP government wrestled the debt and essentially paid off the deficit. So the first thing they did was to balance the books before they did anything.

What was the second thing Tommy Douglas did?

Interjection: Health.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it wasn't health care; it was electrifying rural Saskatchewan, because Tommy Douglas, in the 1940s and 1950s, understood that if you don't have a strong, a vibrant and a technically capable industry, you can't build the economy. If you don't build the economy, you don't have the money to build health care. It wasn't until four terms later that he got around to doing health care.

New Democrats have always understood, social democrats understood, that social democracy is about making sure that everybody gets an equal chance in life by use of public institutions and organizations, such as health care and education—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham should get in his seat.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —and all of those things that are important to make our economies and our people grow and prosper, but we do that in a financially sustainable way.

When I hear Tories and Liberals going on about that stuff, I say to myself, you guys should check out what's really going on in the world.

Mr. John Yakubowski: People voting today don't remember Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that is part of the—I do agree with my friend, Mr. John, over here. I say that on that.

I've got about four minutes left. Just on the energy file, I want to finish on this here. Andrea Horwath and the New Democrats have put forward a plan that is actually sustainable. It doesn't go off and borrow money on the credit card. What we do is we end up restructuring, over a period of time, the hydro mess created by the Liberals, started by the Tories. The Tories started the privatization. They're not going to do undo it. If people think the Tories are going to undo privatization, I've got swampland for you. I've got lots of it up north, and I'll sell you some. The Liberals accelerated the privatization by signing long-term contracts to oversupply the system.

Our approach is to make changes within the hydro system so that we're able to take out the drivers of the increase in costs, so that what we end up doing is bringing back into the fold Hydro One so it becomes, as it was before, a public entity. Why? Because it made about a billion dollars of revenue for the people of Ontario. It would be like selling off the LCBO. Why would you sell off the LCBO? It makes oodles of money for the province. I use "oodles" because I like that better than "billions."

The point is that we would do that. We would end time-of-use pricing, because people shouldn't have to worry about what time they turn on their dryer. If you want people to conserve, invest in conservation programs. There are people who are prepared to put up solar panels, better windows, better furnaces, better dryers, better dishwashers, fridges—all those things. People are prepared to make those investments, but they don't have the money to do it. Put in place conservation programs that allow people to make those investments and utilize the savings from their energy bills to pay for these things. That's how you reduce the consumption.

Strictly driving up the cost is, yes, going to give you some conservation; there's no question. When the price of gas is too high, you don't drive as much. When electricity prices are too high, you turn down or turn off the thermostat. The point is, that, to me, is a punitive way of doing it, and New Democrats don't believe that's the way you should go. You should first manage what you've got so it is as efficient as possible and it provides what it is supposed to—electricity at cost for the people of Ontario—in order to make sure that people are able to live the lives that they want to live and the economy is able to grow in the way that it should; and on the flip side, do the stuff that has to be done in the longer term in order to make sure that the hydro system is there in a way that makes sense for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I realize I've only got a little bit of time left. I would just end on what I started on, for those who came into the House late because they all had meetings—and I'm not invoking any reason behind that. I'm really excited this morning in the sense that Kashechewan First Nation has finally got an agreement for relocation of their community. We're going to be seeing that community move from behind the dike to higher ground over a period of time.

As I said earlier, the people of Mushkegowuk Cree understood what flooding was. They told the colonial government, "Don't build it there." The colonial government went ahead and didn't listen. We flooded people. As a result, we had to build a dike around the community. So finally, after all these years, Chief Leo Friday, along with his council and others who were involved, like Charlie Angus, Murray Trusler and others, have finally got an agreement where we're going to be moving that community upland. We're finally at a point of making sure that people can get on with their lives and not have to worry about their community flooding and us having to evacuate to where people are out of the community for upwards of two years, at a cost of millions of dollars, where those monies could have been used in order to move that community in the first place.

Debate deemed adjourned.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): At this time, I beg to inform the House that, in the name of Her

Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to reduce the regulatory burden on business, to enact various new Acts and to make other amendments and repeals / Loi visant à alléger le fardeau réglementaire des entreprises, à édicter diverses lois et à modifier et abroger d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Dr. Khurram Khan from Hamilton to Queen's Park this morning. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: There are a number of people here today with the Credit Unions of Ontario: from the Windsor Family Credit Union, Susan Stockwell Andrews and Marty Gillis.

I also had breakfast today with Richard Davies and Elaine Simon, and I believe later I'll be meeting with Nolan Andres as well.

Welcome to Queen's Park, everyone.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to extend warm greetings to the grade 12 students of Stephen Lewis Secondary School, along with their teacher, Shona Livingstone, from my riding of Mississauga—Erindale. I wish them a memorable and educational trip.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome from my hometown of East Ferris Mr. Tim Foster, who is the board chair of the Northern Credit Union.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to welcome Rick Hoevenaars from London. He is Libro's vice-president of finance and the CFO. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to welcome a number of members of the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario: Dianne Martin; Searle Schonewille; Rafael Jusi; Annette Weeres; Barbara Jones; Debora Cowie; Maxwell Hamlyn; Victoria Bertrand; Wesley Green; Anne McKenzie; Evelyn Belchior; and Linda Keirl.

Welcome to Queen's Park, and I hope you have a good day here today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Kyleigh Chandran, her sister, Elina Chandran—they're students at Fern Hill School in Oakville—and their grandpa, Clarence Chandran.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to welcome two U of T students who are visiting us today: Aaron Shulman and Ethan Heimlich. Welcome.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Debora Cowie, who is here with the Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario. Welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to also welcome RPNAO to Queen's Park today, including Maxwell Hamlyn, president, and Dianne Martin, the CEO.

Also, page captain Taylor Wilson, who is from St. Paul's: Her mother, Catherine, is joining us today. Welcome, Catherine.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome Brenda Johnson to the Legislature this morning. She joins us from Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is the mother of a member of my staff, Sula Johnson, who is celebrating her birthday today. Happy birthday, Sula, and welcome, Brenda.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure to introduce Michael Jacoby, who is an activist in East York, to the House today. Welcome.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome a number of representatives from Libro Credit Union who are here at Queen's Park. Libro represents a lot of members across the province of Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think they are coming in. I want to acknowledge and introduce the grade 5 classes of Thorncliffe Park Public School from Don Valley West.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'd like to introduce Esther Kothapally, who is a guest of page captain Rajeev Danam, from the riding of Pickering—Scarborough East, on behalf of the member.

Hon. Michael Coteau: In the west gallery, I'd like to introduce Andrew, Anushka and Mya, who work in my constituency office. They're right up there.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to welcome Terry Mundell from the hotel association and Johanne Bélanger, the CEO of Tourism Toronto. Welcome to the Legislature.

Miss Monique Taylor: I see Kelly Harris is here today with FirstOntario. Welcome to the Legislature, Kelly.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just wanted to once again welcome the Credit Unions of Ontario, who are here for their advocacy day. They had a wonderful reception this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to welcome some of the directors of the OFA who are here today. We had a wonderful breakfast this morning, and thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am absolutely sure that the members would join me in indicating to this gentleman, who has served the province well and has a lifetime of public service: Happy birthday, Monte Kwinter.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thereby continuing to set his record that he keeps breaking.

I thank all of our guests for being here. Therefore it is now time for—the member from Nickel Belt to say something.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to welcome Leo Racette, puis Tim Foster, qui sont venus avec les « credit unions ». Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's almost catchy. The member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: If I could just wish the member, Monte Kwinter: Yom huledet sameach.

That's happy birthday in Hebrew.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. By now, everyone has seen or heard the taxpayer-funded Liberal advertisements. I will ask the Premier, through you, Mr. Speaker: When will the Premier stop using taxpayer dollars to advertise for the Liberal Party of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. My resolve still remains. I will work towards civility in the House. If it continues, we'll get to work, and it won't stop.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the Leader of the Opposition that I do understand why he is taking this particular tack in his questioning: because he doesn't have a plan to reduce people's electricity bills. We do have a plan, and that plan will cut people's electricity bills by 25% by summer—

Mr. Steve Clark: Seventeen per cent.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —17% on top of the 8%. And if you are a low-income person in Ontario or you live in a rural or remote area under Hydro One and a number of other distribution companies, your reduction could be 40% to 50%. We heard very clearly that those particular residents were struggling with their electricity bills to an even larger extent.

We have a plan, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to move forward and implement it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The Premier speculates why we're raising this issue. Using taxpayer dollars to advertise for the Liberal Party is wrong. That's why we're bringing it up. It is wrong. The Premier knows it is wrong.

The Liberals have a fascinating talking point. They say that they have to run these Liberal vanity ads so they can use this information to tell people how to manage their budgets. But for 13 years, when they raised hydro bills 400%, did they ever run ads saying, "Sorry, we're raising hydro rates 400%. You need to manage your budget"? Not for a second. This is about one thing and only one thing, and that's selling the Liberal Party, using taxpayer dollars to do so. It's wrong.

My question to the Premier is: You know it's wrong. Do the right thing. Stop running these ads.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Okay. Both sides have had their chance. If it doesn't come down, I'll bring it down for you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not speculating on why the member is asking that question. I know exactly why he's asking the question: because, Mr. Speaker, if he had a plan, he'd be pushing his plan. He'd be putting his—

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I've indicated before, when the Premier is answering and I'm hearing heckling from the same side, it's very difficult for me to ask the other side to come to order. That's number one.

Number two: Right after I finish indicating to you that both sides are getting a little bit too carried away, it continues. Therefore, I'm moving to warnings.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Indigenous Relations is warned.

Who's next? If you can't get my drift, then I'll have to point it out for you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The other part of our plan, which is a real plan, which we are going to move forward to implement, is that we will hold rate increases to inflation for the next four years. So this is not about putting in place a reduction and then not holding those rates—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Finally, Mr. Speaker, we're creating a \$200-million affordability fund for people who want to make investments and aren't able to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Yesterday, the Attorney General alleged that they had "strengthened legislation to provide a clear definition of partisan advertising." But what did the Auditor General say about this? She said, "We cautioned when the government changed the law in 2015 that it was opening the door to" spending taxpayer money on ads that appear partisan. And then the Auditor General said, "Sure enough, the government walked right through that open door" that they created.

Clearly, the Liberals are using a loophole they created to abuse taxpayer dollars. This is what it's about. They can do all the talking points they want. They can say they strengthened the laws or that it's about budgeting. They created a loophole. They're driving a truck through it. It's abuse of taxpayer dollars. It's wrong. Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stop running these ads?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We created the legislation. We put the legislation in place in the first place, because Mike Harris's face was all over advertising consistently.

But let me tell you about the other part of our plan, Mr. Speaker, which again is a real plan that is going to reduce people's electricity prices, which is the issue that we are dealing with in this province, because we have made huge investments. We are in a situation where we have a clean electricity grid and clean air, because of shutting down the coal-fired plants, but there's a cost associated with that.

So the other part of our plan is that we are removing delivery charges from all on-reserve First Nation residential consumers. That is a huge issue. As some of the leadership in the First Nations have said, this will do a huge amount to deal with electricity poverty on reserves. It's a very important step forward.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Today is the first auction of the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme where the Liberals hope to rake in \$1.9 billion. That's \$1.9 billion that taxpayers are going to have to foot the bill for. But maybe the worst part of this Liberal scheme is that it's going to send hard-earned dollars to California.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier think it's appropriate that her government will be encouraging businesses to subsidize those businesses in California?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change is going to want to speak about this. It's a very important day. This is a very important program.

We really believe that taking real action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is not just in the best interests of people today; most importantly, it's in the best interests of the future of the planet. It has to be done and it has to be real. So what we've done is we have settled on the most cost-effective way to do that.

You know, the Leader of the Opposition has said that he would remove Ontario from the cap-and-trade market and put in place a program that would cost the people of Ontario, individuals, four times the amount that cap-and-trade will cost them—four times the amount. That's irresponsible. If we look at other jurisdictions that have done just that, the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions has not been as effective as what we've—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is Greg Sorbara going to run your campaign?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.
Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: This government simply wants to make up numbers. It's more Liberal fake spin.

What we do know, factually, is that under this Liberal scheme, Ontario will be sending upwards of \$300 million a year to California under this Western Climate Initiative. When businesses are struggling to stay afloat in Ontario, how this Premier thinks it's appropriate to be sending \$300 million a year to California is beyond me.

We need a government that is going to support Brantford and Halton and Toronto and Ottawa and Timmins. Right now, they'll be subsidizing Beverly Hills and Hollywood. This Premier is the best minister of economic development that the United States has ever seen, and it has to stop. Will the Premier do the right thing and make sure we don't send hundreds of millions to California?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Today is an auction—an auction that should be free of political interference or actions by any member of this House that would seek to interfere or disrupt the auction. I am not commenting on it, and I would give that strong advice to the member of the opposition. But tomorrow, when the auction is closed, I'll have lots to say to the member of the opposition about some of his behaviour.

The member opposite is proposing a system that cannot achieve the reductions we're getting and would move five megatonnes of leakage or see the relocation of companies. The position he has taken would see gasoline prices go up at four times the rate that they do under cap-and-trade. He is the best economic development leader for the United States that this Legislature has ever seen.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Neither side is helping themselves.

Final supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: Enough of the Liberals' fake spin. What we know for a fact is that this is going to send \$300 million to California. Clearly, the minister and the Premier haven't read the Auditor General's report. They're talking about emission reductions. The Auditor General's report points out that these emission reductions aren't going to happen in Ontario; they're going to happen in California.

We want to see climate change tackled in Ontario. We want to see real emission reductions in Ontario. This is a shell game that makes businesses in Ontario less competitive. How does it make sense to take \$300 million from Ontario businesses and send it to Beverly Hills? This is as bad as the Green Energy Act. They're signing

Ontario up for another scheme that makes this province less competitive.

Will the Premier at least acknowledge that this hurts Ontario? There is still time to walk this back and say that Ontario does not need to be part of the Western Climate Initiative because it subsidizes California.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I always enjoy these conversations with the Leader of the Opposition. They're so enlightening.

Let me explain something: The market price directly reduces four megatonnes. Some \$6 billion to \$8 billion in proceeds goes to Nova corporation to support the re-investment—which is a quarter of a billion dollars—in their major facility in Sarnia. Maybe you should talk to the member from Sarnia. Money is going into Goldcorp to do the first net-zero mine, which will dramatically cut their operating costs because they don't need ventilation with electric vehicles. Maybe he should talk to his northern members.

Not only will he force out companies because it will cost \$74 a tonne under your system, but you won't have any money to reinvest in industry to decarbonize, and you will leave families with unaffordable energy bills, which you claim to care about.

1050

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm addressing this to the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Health boasted that he hadn't heard from a single hospital complaining about massive hydro bills. Clearly, the Premier and her minister aren't listening.

On February 2, 2017, the Ontario Medical Association said, "Hospitals like South Bruce Grey Health Centre are ... forced to use their 1% funding increase to deal with skyrocketing hydro rates instead of patient care thanks to the Ontario government."

The Premier and her party ignored Ontarians' concerns about their soaring hydro bills until political pressure forced them to acknowledge the problem. Clearly, they haven't learned their lesson since they're now ignoring hospital concerns about the same issue.

When will the Premier admit that there's a problem in hospitals and that she and her Minister of Health know about it, and when will she do something to fix it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Unlike the third party, when they had formed government 20-odd years ago, we didn't take their approach, where they closed 24% of acute hospital beds. We didn't take their approach, where they closed—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We didn't close, as they did, 13% of the mental health beds in the province. We didn't decrease hospital funding, as they did in their last budget. We have consistently invested in our hospitals and in the entire health care system in this province—last year, by almost half a billion dollars—to increase the operating costs for the hospitals, as the member well knows from the conversation that I had with his leader in this Legislature yesterday.

We know that hospitals are facing a challenge. We know that energy is a component; it's roughly 1% of operating costs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, back to the Premier. Maybe she'll answer the question. In their pre-budget submission delivered directly to the government, the Ontario Hospital Association also made the case that skyrocketing hospital hydro bills are a huge concern in Ontario. Page 4 of their submission reads, "Energy costs are putting a tremendous strain on hospitals.... Hospitals are by no means immune from the same rising hydro costs that affect all Ontarians."

Do the Premier, or her minister, not read documents given to them by official, non-partisan and highly expert bodies like the OHA?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I acknowledge that energy costs are a concern for hospitals. It represents roughly 1% of their operating budget. We have consistently increased the operating budgets of hospitals as well as targeted funding to—

Interjection.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We have. Despite what the member opposite is saying, we have consistently increased the operating budgets and targeted funding for hospitals.

I want to give one good example from this week, where Mackenzie Health actually received an award for converting all of their lighting to LED lighting. They are the first 100%-LED-lighting—and they've been financed to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Catherine Fife: They need better lighting in the hallways, that's what they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Waterloo is warned.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: As a result, it is estimated that through that process they are going to be saving \$210,000 each and every year.

So I think there are excellent examples where hospitals are finding innovative and appropriate ways to work together in partnership with us to find ways to address that aspect of their budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I can tell the Premier doesn't like these questions; she's not answering them.

It's not just the professional associations that have been raising a red flag about hydro costs. The CEO of the Windsor Regional Hospital alerted the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs that hydro costs at his hospitals were set to increase by \$700,000 in just one

year. He said, in January 2016, “Last year, for our hydro costs at Windsor Regional Hospital between our two campuses, we spent \$3.5 million. This year, to the end of March, we’re projected to spend \$4.2 million, a \$700,000 increase.”

If the Premier and her minister just ignore the experts and say that no one is worried, how can she expect Ontarians to trust that her phantom hydro plan is a genuine attempt to provide relief to Ontarians and not just a support-grabbing occasion?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We provided Windsor Regional Hospital with an increase in their operating budget of \$9.9 million last year—significantly, astronomically more than the numbers that have been quoted over a period of time by the member opposite. It’s a 3.2% increase in their operating budget.

Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge that our hospitals are facing a number of pressures—and electricity, I have to reiterate, is roughly 1% of the total operating budget.

I think there are hospitals around the province that can look—Mackenzie Health, for example, that received from their distribution network a cheque for \$125,000 to assist them in that conversion to 100% LED lighting. It’s a great innovation. It’s an innovation that’s going to save them nearly a quarter of a million dollars a year on their electricity costs.

The combination of investments that we make in innovations out there will help us address this particular issue.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, back to the Premier: Things are not all rosy out there. Hospitals in Sault Ste. Marie, London, Windsor and Toronto are all facing massive increases to their hydro bills at the same time the Premier and her Liberal government are chronically underfunding front-line health care and promising that their phantom hydro plan will include just 2% hydro relief for hospitals.

Will the Premier tell people in any of these communities how a measly 2% savings on their hospital’s hydro bill will ensure good-quality care in their community?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we went through this yesterday, as we remember, when various examples were given. Hamilton was an example that was provided, where I referenced that last year we gave Hamilton Health Sciences a 3.6% increase in their operating budget—an additional \$29.5 million to that corporation to assist them in not only providing and maintaining a sustainable operating budget but also many new and important advancements that lead to the high quality of care that they provide.

I have to say, I’m deeply disturbed that the member opposite continues to revisit Sault Ste. Marie, because that hospital had to go out publicly and oppose what had been declared and asserted by the leader of his party. The

hospital had to go out publicly in the media and say that while electricity costs have risen over the past five years, those increases have not resulted in layoffs at the hospital and no decisions have been made based on those electricity costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again, back to the Premier: This problem is widespread. Access-to-information documents reveal that Health Sciences North in Sudbury and Peterborough Regional Health Centre both saw their hydro consumption rates reduce over the same period of time as their hydro bills went up. That just doesn’t make any sense.

Can the Premier tell us if her 2% savings at least gives hospitals enough hydro relief to stop their bills from going up while the amount of energy they use goes down?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, here we go again, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, okay. Health Sciences North—you mentioned it; I’m going to respond directly to that issue.

Health Sciences North: We provided them, last year, in a budget that they voted against, Mr. Speaker, with a 3.2%—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last chance.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Health Sciences North received 8.8 million new dollars last year for their operating budget.

Peterborough Regional Health Centre: a 4.3% increase in their operating budget last year; 9.4 million new dollars provided to them in a budget, last year, that they voted against.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Again to the Premier: This is a widespread problem. The people of Niagara are worried about their hospitals, too. The Niagara Health System saw a 96% increase in their hydro bills over six years. That translates to \$2.8 million that could have been used to invest in more nursing hours or in potentially life-saving equipment.

Why won’t the Premier just come clean and tell people in Niagara, Peterborough, Sudbury and across the province that her 2% hydro relief for hospitals is just part of her phantom plan, a not-so-thinly-veiled attempt to buy support before the next election?

1100

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, electricity costs for hospitals average approximately 1% of their total budget. That means that 99%, approximately, goes to all of the other expenditures.

Specifically, the Niagara Health System, as was referenced, last year received a 2.5% increase in their operating budget, amounting to \$9.4 million. That was more than enough to cover their increase in electricity costs last year, but also to substantially increase their operating

budget for all of those other elements, the other 99% of the activities that take place in hospitals that are so important to delivering high-quality care there and around the province.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This government has a long history of putting their own political interests ahead of Ontarians. Prior to the March break, it was announced that the province had come to an agreement on health transfers with the federal government, even though the offer was less than what the government originally demanded and less than what the federal government offered three months ago.

The previous Conservative government announced similar terms as the current Liberal government. The Ontario government then feigned outrage. Finance Minister Charles Sousa said that Prime Minister Harper's Conservatives had launched "an attack on Ontario." Mr. Speaker, where is the outrage from the minister and this government today? Why is the deal acceptable now that the federal Liberals are in power?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, there are a number of important differences in the agreement that we struck with the federal government compared to what was on offer by the Harper government. At the end of the day, do we wish it had been closer to what we had suggested? Of course we do. We had very strong third-party evidence to demonstrate that what we were asking for was appropriate to not only maintain the federal contribution but also sustain our health care system effectively.

That being said, we reached an agreement that not only provides for that annual escalator but importantly applies additional targeted funding to two areas that are incredibly important to this province, this government and Ontarians: home care and mental health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: The former health minister, Deb Matthews, said that Flaherty's announcement was "extremely bad news" for the province. In fact, she said, "This is devastating news for us. It's less money to reduce wait times; it's less money to hire nurses."

Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question to ask the minister. Now that he has accepted the cuts from Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals, can he tell the House how many nurses he's going to fire and how long the wait-lists will grow, or was simply his previous Minister of Health misleading the public?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We will continue to need to make important investments in our health care system, as we did last year and as we did the year before. I have to say that the party opposite consistently voted against those health care investments.

What we won't do in the area of home care is what they did when they were in government in 2001, where they slashed our home care so that CCACs were left with a \$175-million shortfall. As a result, in Hamilton, they had to cut the patient load by 32%. In Timiskaming, home care hours were reduced by 20%. In Pembroke, they cut service for 50% of their 3,000 clients. In Algoma, 25% of clients lost services. In North Bay, 20% of all visits were eliminated. Workers were fired and lost their jobs across the board.

We won't repeat their mistakes. We invest in home care.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Premier. People shouldn't have to pay up or wait longer for the care that they need, but that's exactly what's happening under this Premier. Companies are charging people to jump to the front of the line. They're doing this unchecked under the Premier's watch. Right now in Ontario, for-profit companies like Maple are charging people for services like a doctor's diagnosis and writing a prescription.

Does the Premier believe it is okay for companies to charge Ontarians to see a doctor or get a prescription?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I said yesterday and I believe the day before as well that we, as a government, are absolutely committed to the Canada Health Act, to the principles behind medicare. Fifty years ago, those important decisions were made to provide universal health care to this province and to this country, Mr. Speaker.

It took our government, in 2004, to put in place legislatively, to make it the law of this province that what the member opposite is implying or suggesting is not permitted, that those programs and services that are part of OHIP, that are publicly funded and that come under the Canada Health Act—they are not permitted to take place in this province.

There are activities that we are monitoring. I spoke to that yesterday and the day before, and I'm happy to follow up in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Why is it that if it's not allowed, it is happening right here, right now in Ontario? This is wrong. It has to stop.

If your child is sick, you should not have to reach for your credit card to buy answers. But companies like Maple are charging people to see a doctor, to get a diagnosis, asking families to rack up those credit card bills. That's wrong.

That means with the Liberal government in charge, parents of a sick child are basically given the choice of paying up or waiting and waiting, and watching those who pay up leapfrog ahead of them on the wait-list.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Deputy Premier is warned.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Maple actually says it charges fees for services like doctors' visits and getting a prescription because those services are, from their website, "not covered by OHIP." When did the Premier decide that people have to choose between paying up or waiting longer to get their family the care they need?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think it's important for the Legislature to understand what the member opposite is talking about when she references these interactions. These are digital. These are online interactions that are taking place. Online interactions are not OHIP-insured.

Certainly it is something that I'm well aware of. In fact, I have had a conversation with the member opposite about this particular issue. I know it affects the community in Sudbury, as it does other parts of the province. I've asked my ministry to look at it specifically. It's very important that the principles that were laid out in the act in 2004 be followed in terms of no payments for activities or services that are covered by OHIP.

Virtual visits are not OHIP-insured activities, but as I mentioned, my ministry—partly as a result of the member having a conversation with me about it—is looking into this issue.

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

QUALITÉ DE L'EAU DES GRANDS LACS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Today marks World Water Day. It is a day not only to be grateful for Ontario's vital resources, but a day to also confirm our commitment to protect and restore our waters.

In my riding of Kingston and the Islands, Lake Ontario is an integral part of our economy and our community, and it brings together members of my community as well. Ontario relies on the Great Lakes for our strength and success, and I am pleased to see our government take continued action to protect our lakes and restore them to environmental health.

We know that 99% of Ontarians live around the Great Lakes, making it even more critical that the health of our waters and ecosystem is looked after. Can the minister please explain to the House the efforts our government has made to protect the Great Lakes?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's no surprise that the environment questions come from this side of the House.

I want to thank the Premier for reaching out to our governors. I've been hearing in my conversations with my counterparts that she's been recognized for stepping up and taking a leadership role on this important issue. Thank you very much, Premier.

Some \$300 million is at stake, which has huge consequences. We passed the Great Lakes Protection Act. We

have source water protection and our conservation authorities, under the leadership of the Minister of Natural Resources, are kicked into action.

I also want to thank what the opposition criticized as being bureaucratic, which was the Great Lakes Guardians' Council. This is totally volunteer. That organization, co-chaired by Grand Chief Madahbee, works with mayors, farmers, business leaders and local environmentalists and is now coordinating multi-level government action to protect the Great Lakes and engage Americans. We're very concerned about this, Mr. Speaker, and acting quickly.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for that response. It's very encouraging to hear that our province takes the health of our Great Lakes very seriously. It is also promising that Ontario has worked so collaboratively with varying levels of government, including our partners in the US, to restore the health of the Great Lakes. Shared waters absolutely requires a shared responsibility to conserve and protect.

Recently proposed funding reductions in the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will seriously impact the progress that we've made so far. For more than 40 years, Ontario has worked with our state partners through various Great Lakes agreements, and given that the Great Lakes are an economic engine for Kingston and the Islands and our province, it is critical that we continue to collaborate with our existing partners.

Can the minister please explain to the House how our government plans to move forward to keep our Great Lakes well-protected?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: In addition to working with my counterparts in the eight Great Lakes states, we have a very strong relationship with Quebec.

Notre partenariat avec le Québec, c'est très important. Nous travaillons ensemble avec mon homologue, David Heurtel, et sa collègue Christine St-Pierre, la ministre des affaires intergouvernementales. On va envoyer une lettre ensemble, parce que pour nous autres, c'est un grand défi pour l'économie régionale des Grands Lacs. Le succès de notre partenariat se traduit en investissements privés et en la revitalisation économique pour des communautés telles que Buffalo, Erie et Muskegon, et nos amis américains.

Mais le même défi existe pour nous autres, parce que les petites communautés au bord des lacs confrontent les mêmes décisions. Ça, c'est très important pour une économie vivante et c'est une question économique, parce que les résultats des coupures budgétaires, c'est un grand défi pour notre—

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. Premier, 10 years ago, a local restaurant in my riding, Fork and Plate, had a hydro bill of \$600 per month. Today, their bill is at least \$2,200, and in the summer it

climbs to \$3,500. Your 25% figure includes the HST rebate you have already announced, so it's really 17%. In the last 10 years, you have more than tripled their hydro bill. This is your legacy. Now you offer them a fraction in return. To top it all off, InnPower is asking for a retro-active rate increase.

Premier, when will you do the right thing and provide real and lasting relief to families and businesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just wanted to let the Legislature know—and I know some people are seeing it on social media—that news is breaking that there's been an incident near the UK Parliament. Dozens of people on the Westminster Bridge have been injured and Parliament is in lockdown. I just wanted folks to know that, and I think all of our thoughts are with the people and their families and parliamentarians in England.

We have a plan. The business that the member opposite is talking about will see, it's true, an additional 17% reduction—17% plus 8% is 25%, Mr. Speaker. It's very important to us that those local businesses are able to thrive, and that's exactly why we're bringing a plan forward. I know that the opposition doesn't have a plan to reduce electricity bills. We do, and we're going to move ahead so that businesses just like this one will be able to see that reduction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: That's just doesn't cut it for the people in my riding or across Ontario. We all know margins are slim in the restaurant business. Businesses provide jobs that, in turn, provide for families. Fork and Plate proudly employs 22 of my constituents. Restaurants like Fork and Plate across Ontario look at their hydro bills and question how they can stay afloat.

Premier, enough is enough. Why are you threatening jobs in my riding and across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Once again, I'm pleased to rise and talk about the fair hydro plan and the 25% reduction that all families, small businesses and farms will be receiving across the province.

I know the honourable member mentioned InnPower and their rate application. I think it's important to mention, as part of our fair hydro plan, in bringing down electricity costs our government is also providing additional support to those facing the highest delivery costs in the province. When introduced, regarding the distribution charges levied, there will be eight utilities with the highest rates which will be lowering their distribution rates to protect ratepayers in those areas. InnPower is one of those utilities whose distribution charges will be reduced. And as we said, that 25% reduction—with the RRRP reduction that they're going to be seeing through InnPower, they can see anywhere up to a 40% to 50% reduction.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. I'd like to tell a little tale about Henry Fiset and Sons Ltd. in Elk Lake. Jerome and Terry are pillars in that commun-

ity. They run a machine shop. Their hydro usage in January 2011 was 391 kilowatt hours per day. They made huge changes in their business, and in January 2017 their kilowatts per day were 220. So that was a 43% decrease. They have done their part, yet the overall bill went up. Actually, the cost per kilowatt hour went up by 66%.

Will you finally admit that your hydro plan for people like Henry Fiset and sons has been a disaster for the last decade?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased, again, to rise and talk about Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan that is specifically looking after folks who live in the rural and remote parts of our province. We have heard over the last nine months that I've been in this portfolio, and even longer, that there were concerns by businesses and by families that are in the rural and northern parts of our province. So we brought forward rebates at those times, but they were very targeted in source and didn't necessarily provide the necessary relief that they were looking for. That's why the Ontario fair hydro plan actually reduces those bills by 25%. For businesses, if they're time-of-use businesses, they will qualify for this.

There are also other programs out there that actually help businesses lower their rates. I know the member talked about some of the programs that they were using—lowering their bills—which is great because that actually helps everyone across the province lower their energy consumption, which allows us not to build generation, and lowers our costs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Speaker, this government has been in power for 15 years, and now they are in danger. Their poll numbers are going down so now they implement the fair hydro plan. Were they thinking about people like Jerome and Terry, and all the other business people and all the other residents, all these years with their long-term energy plans? They never took the actual people who were paying the bills into account. It's a little too late now.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We took action when we took over as government, rebuilding a system that was left in tatters by previous governments that cancelled programs, froze rates and never invested in the system. We made sure that folks in northern Ontario had access to power, Mr. Speaker, because before we had an unreliable system that was never invested in by the previous governments, and they know it.

So as we rebuilt the system, as we eliminated coal, we invested \$50 billion to make sure that we have a clean system, a reliable system, and now we're working to make it as affordable as possible.

The Ontario fair hydro plan will bring forward a 25% reduction for all families, and even more in rural areas.

NURSES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Registered practical nurses play a vital role in Ontario's health care system. As a former nurse, a nursing professor and an administrator in a long-term-care facility, I know nurses are the largest group of health care professionals who provide quality care in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt and across the province in hospitals, communities, correctional facilities, local schools, long-term-care homes and retirement homes.

1120

The influence and impact nurses have on patients, their families and this province can't be quantified or measured, because they are an educated, dedicated, hard-working, knowledgeable and caring group of individuals who give so much of themselves at work and in our communities every day.

I want to recognize the hundreds of RPNs working in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. They include Scarborough Hospital, Birchmount campus, St. Paul's L'Amoreaux seniors centre, Tendercare, Shepherd Village, Mon Sheong nursing home, TransCare and Carefirst.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What message did the minister want to say to the RPNs who are visiting Queen's Park today?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First and foremost, I want to say thank you to our nurses, and particularly to those nurses, the RPNs, who are here today with RPNAO on their Queen's Park day. They are absolutely outstanding, and they do outstanding work.

We value the work of all our nurses. Since 2003, we have increased the number of nurses employed in this province by 26,000. Specific to RPNs, we have increased the number of RPNs working in this province by 15,700 since we came into office in 2003. That is a growth of 61%. We value the work that each and every one of those RPNs does in this province.

We continue to make those investments in all of our nurses, including in RPNs. Just since 2015 alone, there are 2,400 more RPNs employed. That's a growth rate of 6.1% just in that period alone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you to the Minister of Health for his dedication to the nurses in this province. RPNAO, who is here today at Queen's Park, represents the voice of over 46,000 RPNs in Ontario. Our province continues to be proud to stand alongside these nurses since we came into office.

Since 2003, as the minister said, there are 15,000 more RPNs employed in this province. I want to remind the members opposite about this: a growth of more than 60%, including nearly 10,000 new RPNs since 2012. This means we have more RPNs working across the province providing high-quality care to Ontarians in hospitals, in public health, long-term-care homes, family health care teams and community health care centres.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please inform the House what our government's commitment is to continue working with RPNs in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: She's absolutely right that our government is proud of the track record we have working with nurses in this province. Together with nurses and associations like the RPNAO, we've made great progress not only ensuring there's a stable RPN workforce, but also ensuring Ontarians are receiving the best possible care.

We also know there is more work to be done. That's why I want to reiterate this government's commitment to continue to work with Ontario's nurses, not only to support them and their workforce, but also to grow their practice and their scope, to provide high-quality care to even more Ontarians. RPNAO has been clear that scope-of-practice changes would help address certain barriers and ensure patients receive faster access to the right care, and our government agrees. We know that by working together on increasing RPNs' scope, we can further improve access to care for Ontarians and reduce wait times even further. We're committed to working with RPNAO on this important initiative.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Many constituents are sending me their hydro bills and letters expressing their outrage and their concern. The Calberrys are a retired couple on a fixed income in Hartington. They've followed every step laid out by this government to help conserve energy. They schedule their lives by their time-of-use meter.

A 17% reduction is not enough for them and many others in my riding. In the words of the Calberrys, these "so-called reductions being rolled out are nothing but a case of giving with one hand and taking with two."

When will this government stop giving with one hand and hurting so much with the other two?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased that the member knows about the fair hydro plan and the 25% reduction that is coming to seniors. It is important to know, Mr. Speaker, that I'm assuming that these individuals are Hydro One customers. That means that they're also going to see a significant reduction from the RRRP. That will actually reduce their bills between 40% and 50%. On top of that, they can also apply for the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which, through Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, is actually going to give them an additional reduction on top of that.

Do you know what? We need to ensure that couples like the seniors that have been mentioned by the honourable member ensure they know about the fair hydro plan and know about the reductions that are coming, because we actually have a plan, like that party—they do not.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll try again to the Premier, Speaker. The Taylors are another retired couple in my

riding in Carleton Place who have to spend their retirement living by the schedule of the time-of-use meter. They do all their chores on the weekend. They cook in the dark during the week. The Taylors believe that retired people should not have to go to such extremes, and I fully agree. The fact is that, no matter how hard people try, hydro is just too expensive. Their last bill was over \$400.

I'm going to send these letters over to the Premier. Her responses have not been adequate. Will the Premier commit to reading these letters so that she fully understands the hurt she has caused and respond directly to the Calberrys and the Taylors?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: We're more than happy to continue to respond to the needs of Ontarians. That's why we acted with the fair hydro plan, something that we have brought forward to help every family in the province with a 25% reduction. That also goes to family farms and to small businesses. As I mentioned, we have the Ontario Electricity Support Program, which actually will help many, many families as well. We want to ensure that more families, more individuals that actually would qualify for this program get on it, because they can actually see their bills reduced even more. To help families even further, we brought forward the affordability fund, a trust that will be in place to allow families to access dollars to actually increase their insulation to help them reduce their bills even more.

The fair hydro plan is the single largest reduction in electricity bills in Ontario's history, and it's a plan that we're very proud of.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Hard-working Ontarians are stressed and they are becoming sick over unpredictable work schedules. These are the findings of a recent survey done by the Ontario Federation of Labour: Job prospects are getting worse, wages are down, and the cost of living keeps going up. But the Liberals aren't willing to alleviate this stress and raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. Does the Premier have the final report of the Changing Workplaces Review? And if she does, what is she waiting for? When can—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm not finished. When can hard-working Ontarians expect changes to dangerously outdated labour standards?

Now I'm finished.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm pleased to answer that question. Thank you to the member for that question. It is important, Speaker. We know in the province of Ontario that the nature of work in this province is changing, and it's affecting people in ways we'd sooner not see. We're determined to do something about it. As a result of that, less than two years ago we started the Changing Workplaces Review. We got two esteemed gentlemen to do that work, somebody who has been associated with

employers in the province of Ontario and somebody who has been associated with employees and organized labour in the province of Ontario. I'm expecting to get the best advice from these people after they've been out speaking to Ontarians all around this province. We're determined to bring forward a report that stands up for working families in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Premier: Ontarians are working two and three part-time and piece-meal jobs without knowing when they'll be scheduled next, while they are struggling to pay rent and hydro bills that keep going up even when their pay doesn't. They deserve wages they can count on, they deserve hours they can rely on, and they deserve schedules they can plan around. They deserve better jobs. Does the Premier have a copy yet of the final Changing Workplaces Review? This government has said "spring of 2017," and it's spring.

These problems aren't going away. They're still dragging their feet. I'd like to know what the Premier has to say to Ontarians who simply can't wait any longer.

1130

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you for that supplementary question. We've gone out to the people in the province. We've asked for their advice. We've talked to business, we've talked to employers, we've talked to organized labour and we've talked to advocacy groups. They've all given us the best advice. All that advice is being compiled.

We had an interim report in the spring, and we're asking the advisers to bring forward their best recommendations. That will be done in a timely manner; I'm expecting it, within days or weeks, to land on my desk. It will be translated, it will be made accessible, and a discussion will take place that involves everybody in the province of Ontario to make sure that this province remains an excellent place in which to work.

INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

Speaker, as you know, our government provides funding to support critical infrastructure and training to create better opportunities for indigenous people. This helps them gain meaningful employment and assists them with business development across various sectors.

Investing in the economic development of our urban and rural indigenous communities benefits all of Ontario by offering students, entrepreneurs, workers and businesses critical tools for success through partnerships with various indigenous agencies.

Will the minister please provide this House with an example of the good work that one of these agencies is doing that the Aboriginal Economic Development Fund has supported?

Hon. David Zimmer: I thank the member for that question. The Aboriginal Economic Development Fund is an important investment tool for indigenous peoples across Ontario. This year, Anishinabek Employment and Training Services received \$250,000 through this fund for its construction craft worker training program. Upon completion of the program's first component, students begin the seven-week construction craft worker training program, followed by a further week of resumé building and interview preparedness.

The training, offered in partnership with Northstar training facility, provides prosperity for indigenous people, which in turn helps all of Ontario and all of First Nations prosper. This is good news for the indigenous people of Ontario and for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you to the minister. I'm delighted, and I know that my constituents in Beaches–East York are also delighted, to know that the government is supporting an indigenous-led program to help create economic opportunities for indigenous communities to help build a stronger and more prosperous Ontario.

I'm also proud to see that our government is living up to the commitments it has made to create and improve economic outcomes for indigenous people. By providing the necessary supports, we are partnering with indigenous communities to develop long-term strategies and to diversify local economies while collaborating on region-wide projects.

In Beaches–East York, I have numerous representatives in the aboriginal community who come to me on a regular basis looking for opportunity, which can be assisted by these agencies. Will the minister please elaborate on the impact this has had on our community members who have been involved with this program?

Hon. David Zimmer: Here is an example: I recently had the pleasure of hearing from Sage, who is a member of the Anishinabek Nation. After living for many years in Thunder Bay, Sage found finding secure employment a real challenge. He heard about the aboriginal employment and training services apprenticeship program and he seized the opportunity to become involved.

With regard to the program, Sage personally described it as a rewarding and positive experience that put him on another road, another path in life. Sage successfully completed the seven-week construction craft training program. He tells me that the experience has left him with the desire to pursue his apprenticeship to its completion, with the ultimate goal of achieving his journeyman certification.

That is good news for Sage. Again, that is good news for everyone in Ontario. It's good news for the union—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Last year, the minister joined me and

Renfrew county officials to go over the ongoing issue of the continued twinning of Highway 17 and to see the roadway for himself. While the project reached Scheel Drive last year, the next phase still has yet to make it into the ministry's five-year plan.

Highway 17 connects Canadian Nuclear Laboratories and Garrison Petawawa to the nation's capital. It is also a major artery for commercial truck traffic. Moreover, this project is vital to the economic development of eastern Ontario because the roadway is an east-west transportation corridor.

Given how crucially important this roadway is, will the minister finally commit today to putting the twinning of Highway 17 into his ministry's five-year plan?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for the question. He is right: In December of last year, I had the opportunity—with his help, frankly, and with help from municipal leaders, from ordinary residents, and representatives from Garrison Petawawa and from the nuclear industry. I heard loud and clear in that forum from all of those participants about the critical need for our government to continue to invest in highway infrastructure, like this particular project.

I understand that that member knows that we have, over the last number of years, continued to make progress on the four-laning of this highway. I certainly know, as I said that day, that more work needs to be done. They made a compelling case. I'm quite happy to continue to work with that member, to work with his community and to be in a stronger position to provide more updates in the coming weeks and months.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the minister: The minister has heard the county government's case for the continued twinning of Highway 17. They have done their due diligence; it's now up to the minister. Last year, the minister saw for himself the heavy volume of private and commercial traffic on Highway 17. As he said himself—and he saw the examples. He heard from Garrison Petawawa; he heard from Canadian Nuclear Laboratories—presentations from both of them, as well as presentations from the county and the town of Renfrew. In the minister's own words about the day in the county, he said, and he repeated it today: "All of you collectively are making a compelling case. I've heard the message loud and clear."

Since the case has been made, and the minister agrees that it's a good case, I will ask the minister yet again if he will commit today to putting the next phase of the twinning of Highway 17 into his ministry's next five-year capital plan.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member again for his follow-up question. He was kind enough to quote me from that public forum that took place in December in his community. He is right: Those are the words that I used. In fact, they match the words I used in response to the member's first question today. There has been and there continues to be a compelling case that that community is making. I listened very closely, Speaker. We had a

chance—we haven't talked about that so far today—to take a tour of the highway, to see the difference, frankly, between where the four-laning has already occurred and where it has not yet occurred. So I've seen it. We were joined that day by the Ministry of Transportation's regional director, who understands the issue as well.

I thank the member for continuing to advocate. As I said in the response to the first question, I expect that over the next number of weeks or months there will be additional updates that we can provide. I thank the member for bringing it not only to the floor of this House but for continuing to talk to me and my ministry about the importance of continuing to invest in critical transportation infrastructure.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Today is World Water Day. I want to take a moment to remind this government that in a wealthy province like Ontario, many First Nations communities are still struggling to get clean drinking water. Our province has more boil-water advisories than any other province in this country. How can we tolerate this happening today, that some communities up north are living without clean drinking water while a boil-water advisory in southern Ontario wouldn't last more than 48 hours?

Why is this government not acting to provide clean drinking water to First Nations and stopping this crisis? How is it not making sure every community in Ontario has access to clean drinking water? Why is it not a priority for this government? Let's remember: Water is life.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I completely agree with the member opposite that this is an issue of highest priority. Both the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation have been working with First Nations and with the federal government. The last list I saw, I think there were 47 communities where there were boil-water orders. With 20 of them there was work under way; with another 27 there was work that had not yet begun.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very high priority. We want to see those communities taken off of boil-water orders. More than that, we want sustainable plans so that going forward there is the capacity to troubleshoot, to make sure that when a water system is put in place on a reserve, that water system can be maintained. That's the work that we're doing.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given by the Minister of Energy to his question concerning hydro rates. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The member, by his own admission, admitted that he didn't even ask a question. How can he—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay.

Interjection: Can I respond?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You can't have another question.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's my great honour today to welcome to the gallery the Right Reverend Michael Oulton of the Anglican Church of Canada and his son Thomas. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Emma Harris and her mother, Carin Harris, who are here today from my riding of Durham; as well as Gabby Nobrega and Michelle Scott, who are here with us from the Grocery Foundation. They will be in instantaneously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome them.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEIGHBOURLINK CHATHAM-KENT

Mr. Monte McNaughton: One of the presenters at the most recent rural and small-town poverty round table I organized in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex was a delegation from NeighbourLink Chatham-Kent.

NeighbourLink is a Christian lay ministry that offers life skills training to assist those in need. In Chatham-Kent, NeighbourLink is supported by 29 area churches. Their motto is "Connecting people in need with people who can help." In keeping with this motto, NeighbourLink first connects people to services already existing, but if a gap in services is discovered, NeighbourLink attempts to fill it.

Recently, the children's services division of the municipality forecast that possible funding cuts would lead to the cancellation of some children's play spaces. NeighbourLink stepped forward and found three churches which have unused space and will provide these free to the municipality in order to continue the children's programs.

NeighbourLink supports many families by offering advice and instruction in budgeting, parenting and home economics. They also provide a free income tax service for people on OW or ODSP.

One issue that is constantly raised at my rural and small-town poverty round tables is the lack of availability of transportation. This is perhaps the largest of NeighbourLink's projects in Chatham-Kent. Almost 50 wonderful volunteers provide free transportation to assist those in need to get to medical appointments, the food bank or to other necessary appointments.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the parishes and volunteers who support the great work of NeighbourLink and who are of such great service to their communities.

TEACHERS' LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Wayne Gates: In Niagara, the Catholic elementary school teachers have been locked out since Monday morning. I went to my riding yesterday, and the message from everyone is clear: This isn't good for our children, it's not good for families and, frankly, it's dividing our community. We need to put the children first.

I was on the picket line today, and it's clear to me that the teachers just want to teach. They love their students, they miss their students, and they want to be in the classroom doing what they do best: teaching our future generations. We need to get them back in their classrooms.

From what I understand, the teachers have offered binding arbitration to the school board. This would mean they would be back in school tomorrow, work-to-rule would be over, teachers would be teaching, and kids would be in the classroom. I can't understand why the board would reject this offer.

Today, I ask the minister to come to Niagara and speak with the teachers who have been locked out of their schools, and also with the board members. Speak with the parents who just want their kids to have the education their tax dollars pay for.

The province must play an immediate role here. Through binding arbitration, we can end the lockout, end work-to-rule, and we can get those teachers back in their classrooms.

I ask the minister: Please come to Niagara immediately, for the sake of the families across Niagara.

NUTRITION MONTH

Ms. Soo Wong: March is recognized as Nutrition Month, a month to focus on healthy eating across Ontario. As a former nurse and a member of the Healthy Kids Panel, I can attest to how vital it is for our children and youth to have the knowledge to make healthy food choices.

One of the recommendations from the Healthy Kids Panel was to require food service providers with 20 or more locations to include the number of calories for each food and beverage item on their menus. Ontario became the first province in Canada to implement this type of menu labelling. This initiative, coupled with an extensive healthy eating and nutrition component in the current health and physical education curriculum, is preparing our children to make healthy food choices.

To further enhance this curriculum, shortly I will be facilitating a meeting with Neil Currie, the general manager of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and local high school principals in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt to introduce the Six by Sixteen program. This program was created by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and is aimed to ensure each Ontario

teenager can plan and prepare six nutritious meals by the age of 16. This knowledge will facilitate life-long nutritional well-being.

As we celebrate Nutrition Month, I'd like to recognize the leadership of Minister Hoskins, Minister Leal, Minister Hunter and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in keeping Ontarians healthy and ensuring our youngest citizens are making healthy choices.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: On behalf of our entire caucus, we would like to welcome the Credit Unions of Ontario to Queen's Park again today. Yesterday we had the opportunity to take part in a fantastic, thought-provoking session with their members.

It's easy to say that it's time to talk about the strength of Ontario's credit unions because, as a strong, secure place to put your money and invest, those are the credit unions of today. Credit unions provide support to families buying homes and they provide small businesses the money they need to expand.

But even though they have a credit union, as an example, inside Ryerson University, they are unable to handle student loans. They donate millions to hospitals—in North Bay, for instance, Northern Credit Union donated \$100,000 to our new hospital—but they can't handle a hospital's finances.

Changes need to be made to level the playing field. Credit unions need to be able to process payments for municipal property, handle university loans, deal with school boards and compete for the hospital's business. These are the dreams of credit unions. But these are also the dreams of communities and their members all across Ontario.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the issue of World Water Day, which is being celebrated around the globe. For everyone who has ever been thirsty, for everyone who has had to go without, you know how precious water is. The world is heating up, and drinkable, fresh water will become harder and harder to secure.

Here in Ontario, we have a range of laws but we don't yet have the protection of water that we need. The Grassy Narrows First Nation knows exactly what this is about, having fought for decades to deal with the mercury poisoning of their local water system. They persevered under extreme conditions to defend their community.

In Brant county, the Concerned Citizens of Brant are fighting to protect the drinking water source for the township of Paris from an aggregate project that is projected for their wellhead protection area.

In the Guelph area, Wellington Water Watchers are fighting to ensure that local water resources are publicly controlled rather than given over to private bottling interests.

That is why New Democrats believe we need an Ontario water strategy, a strategy that puts public needs for water first and that will actually protect Ontario's water resources for the future. Water is life in Grassy Narrows, in Brant county, in Wellington and across Ontario. Government action needs to reflect that reality.

EMMA HARRIS

Mr. Granville Anderson: I rise today to formally recognize Emma Harris, who is here in the gallery with us today, a student from my riding of Durham who attends Bowmanville High School. Emma Harris is one of 11 Ontario students who have been named Agent of Change ambassadors for the Toonies for Tummies campaign.

Toonies for Tummies is designed to raise funds and awareness of the importance of student nutrition. Emma organized a movie screening at her school and sold tickets and treats for toonies. I am pleased to share that this event attracted 380 students and raised \$976 for the campaign. Emma's initiatives have contributed to such an amazing cause.

The Grocery Foundation, which is one of Ontario's largest funders of student nutrition, has raised over \$15 million for student nutrition through the Toonies for Tummies campaign. In 2016, the Grocery Foundation launched its Agents of Change program. This past year, a number of teens from across Ontario actively led efforts in their schools to elevate discussions around the importance and impact these programs are having. Their effort speaks to a bigger opportunity; namely, a student-led movement that is directly related to feeding healthier generations.

1510

With our collective support, students like Emma Harris can continue to be part of a bigger effort to feed a healthier generation.

BAYFIELD

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's always a good day when you can stand in the House and share good news about your riding—in this case, my riding of Huron-Bruce.

Situated on the shores of Lake Huron is the village of Bayfield, a picturesque little town that has recently received a huge recognition. In a recent survey conducted by Expedia, the little town with a big heart was recognized as one of the top three friendliest towns in Canada. An article on the travel company's blog said: "Bobbing boats, charming boutiques, and ringing bicycle bells make it easy to think you're in some kind of fairy tale when you're walking through Bayfield."

One visitor to Bayfield wrote about the town: "Bayfield is charming with lots of small beach style shops, art galleries and fabulous restaurants all within a few blocks.... A perfect setting for a weekend get away from the city or a relaxing vacation by the beach!"

Anyone who has visited this town will know that you're treated like a friend or a neighbour. Stories of shop owners and residents asking visitors where they are from and offering recommendations for local attractions are plentiful.

So with spring and summer just around the corner, I'd like to encourage everyone to take a trip out to Bayfield and experience the hospitality for yourselves along Lake Huron's shores. You can take a room at the Ashwood Inn, the Little Inn of Bayfield or the Loft B&B and explore all that this charming town has to offer.

Don't forget: When you come to Ontario's West Coast, share your experience on Twitter by using #BayfieldOntario.

ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Mr. John Fraser: Last Friday, many of us celebrated St. Patrick's Day. St. Patrick's Day is a time to reflect upon and remember a vital part of Canada's history, a history which is often forgotten: the history that tells the story of thousands of Irish immigrants who arrived in 1847. Thousands of men, women and children were forced to leave Ireland, fleeing the potato famine that devastated Ireland in the 1840s. The journey across the Atlantic was a deadly one, seeing thousands of Irish immigrants lose their lives on what were referred to as "coffin ships," many dying of typhus.

Speaker, 38,000 immigrants from Ireland arrived in Toronto in 1847; the population of Toronto was 20,000. Next to the island airport here is Ireland Park, which commemorates their arrival, located near to where the ships landed. The park is home to a group of sculptures serving as a touching memorial to those who arrived in Canada seeking refuge, with the hope of beginning a new life.

Many of those Irish descendants arrived in the Ottawa Valley, on the Ontario side and on the Quebec side. There is a rich, deep history of the Irish in the Ottawa Valley that we're all very proud of.

Given some of the things that are happening in the world today in relation to immigration, it's important to remember and honour the Irish immigrants, their sacrifices and courage in coming to Canada, and the intrinsic role that they have played in shaping our province and our country.

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize United Nations World Water Day. It's a good opportunity to recognize the importance of protecting our environment and to protect this vital resource that we all depend on.

It's also a good opportunity to remind the Minister of the Environment and the members of the Legislature about the proposal our community is dealing with that could put our drinking water in Oxford at risk. There is a proposal in the village of Beachville to locate a landfill

on fractured limestone near the Thames River. It's also located close to one of the town of Ingersoll's main wells. A leak could contaminate all that water. We believe that locating the landfill on this site is simply too great a risk.

I've had the privilege of delivering tens of thousands of letters to the Minister of the Environment conveying these concerns from my community. The local mayors have been at Queen's Park to deliver the same message.

I want to commend everyone who took the time to share their concerns and all the volunteers who have put countless hours into getting the message out, doing the research, raising money, attending events and many other tasks. It's a long fight, but these volunteers and community are committed.

So today, as we celebrate World Water Day, I want to remind the government of the importance of protecting our groundwater and the Thames River, and ensuring that our drinking water is not put at risk.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RELIABLE ELEVATORS ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017

SUR LES ASCENSEURS FIABLES

Mr. Dong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 and the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 in respect of elevators and elevating device mechanics / *Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment et la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur en ce qui concerne les ascenseurs et les mécaniciens d'ascenseurs et d'appareils de levage.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Han Dong: The bill amends the law with respect to elevators. First, a person who applies for a permit to construct a building with seven or more storeys must show that the building will have enough elevator capacity. Second, elevator maintenance contracts are subject to protection under the Consumer Protection Act, 2002. Third, an elevator that breaks down must be repaired within 14 days for most buildings and seven days for long-term-care homes and retirement homes, unless the regulations provide otherwise.

LONG-TERM CARE HOMES AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr. Walker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 / *Projet de loi 110, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bill Walker: The bill requires the minister to adjust the funding provided to long-term-care homes with which the minister has an agreement or arrangement to provide funding to the home with respect to its ongoing operating costs as of January 1 in a given year. The amount of any increase in funding required as a result of the adjustment is to be paid out of the funds appropriated for that purpose by the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of bills. Introduction of bills.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Thanks for the balanced budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Last call for the introduction of bills?

I really would like to proceed without heckling in the middle of introduction of bills.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 45 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot item 45 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

1520

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), Ms. Malhi, Mr. Dong and Mr. Bradley exchange places such that Ms. Malhi assumes ballot item number 47, Mr. Dong assumes ballot item

number 51 and Mr. Bradley assumes ballot item number 70.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(b), Ms. Malhi, Mr. Dong and Mr. Bradley exchange—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

DENTAL CARE

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding dental care.

“Whereas lack of access to dental care affects overall health and well-being, and poor oral health is linked to diabetes, cardiovascular, respiratory disease, and Alzheimer’s disease; and

“Whereas it is estimated that two to three million people in Ontario have not seen a dentist in the past year, mainly due to the cost of private dental services; and

“Whereas approximately every nine minutes a person in Ontario arrives at a hospital emergency room with a dental problem but can only get painkillers and antibiotics, and this costs the health care system at least \$31 million annually with no treatment of the problem;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to invest in public oral health programs for low-income adults and seniors by:

“—ensuring that plans to reform the health care system include oral health so that vulnerable people in our communities have equitable access to the dental care they need to be healthy;

“—extending public dental programs for low-income children and youth within the next two years to include low-income adults and seniors; and

“—delivering public dental services in a cost-efficient way through publicly funded dental clinics such as public health units, community health centres and aboriginal health access centres to ensure primary oral health services are accessible to vulnerable people in Ontario.”

I support this petition and send it to the table with page Catherine.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Granville Anderson: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take an immediate leadership role in the control and eradication of the invasive caustic and poisonous dog-strangling vine by:

“(1) Encouraging/supporting industry in the development of an effective herbicide;

“(2) Introducing biological control as soon as proven beneficial, as an example the moth *Hypena opulenta*, starting with the heavily infested areas (e.g. Durham region).”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to page Laura.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of Meaford and the Blue Mountains and farming communities are in need and deserve access to health care close to home;

“Where the potential loss of the Meaford hospital operating room would deprive the growing retirement communities of an access to critical care close to home; and

“Whereas the loss of the Meaford hospital operating room would also reduce the communities’ ability to recruit and retain physicians in the area, resulting in job losses and an overall negative impact on the local economies;

“Whereas years of underfunding have resulted in cuts to health care and hurt patient care, resulting in fewer and fewer services, and patients suffering more complications, readmission and death;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To review and fix the hospital funding formula in an effort to ensure our community hospitals have enough resources to continue providing safe, quality and integrated care for local residents.”

I fully support it, and will affix my name and send it with page Taylor.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is my pleasure to read this petition into the record. It’s called “Fight for \$15 and Fairness.”

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario’s labour and employment laws:

“—require all workers be entitled to a starting wage that reflects a uniform, provincial minimum, regardless of a worker’s age, job or sector of employment;

“—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

“—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

“—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

“—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

“—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

“—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

“—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

“—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

“—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

“—ensure all workers are paid at least \$15 an hour” in the province of Ontario.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Granville Anderson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home inspections are an integral part of the real estate transaction; and

“Whereas there are no current rules and education system to qualify who is and who is not a home inspector; and

“Whereas the public interest is best served by protecting consumers against receiving a bad home inspection;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Ensure the speedy passage of Bill 59, Putting Consumers First Act, 2016, and mandate the government of Ontario to bring in a strong qualifications regime for home inspectors.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my name.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows—and I’m still getting these hydro petitions:

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

“Whereas over half of Ontarians’ power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government’s lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these

reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians’ electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians’ energy bills.”

I support this petition and send it down with page Franny.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s energy system was founded on the principle of ‘Power at cost’ and ‘The gifts of nature are for the people,’ which built Ontario into an economic powerhouse;

“Whereas people and businesses should be able to count on affordable, reliable energy to ensure a bright future for Ontario’s next generations;

“Whereas privatization of our hydro system by Liberal and Conservative governments has driven up generation costs from 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour in 2002 to an on-peak price of 18 cents per kilowatt hour in 2016;

“Whereas Ontarians have reason to be concerned the Liberal government is planning to facilitate the privatization of local distribution companies;

“Whereas the Liberal Party did not run on a plan to privatize Ontario’s hydro system, and as many as 80% of people across Ontario oppose the privatization of Hydro One;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to stop any further privatization of Ontario’s hydro system, including both Hydro One and any local distribution companies.”

I agree wholeheartedly. I will sign it and give it to my page, Laura from Windsor-Tecumseh, to bring up to the desk.

1530

HYDRO RATES

Mr. James J. Bradley: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas electricity prices have increased and in too many cases become unaffordable for Ontarians;

“Whereas Ontario is a prosperous province and people should never have to choose between hydro and other daily necessities;

“Whereas people want to know that hydro rate relief is on the way; that relief will go to everyone; and that relief will be lasting because it is built on significant change;

“Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would reduce hydro bills for residential consumers, small businesses and farms by an average of 25% as part of a significant system restructuring, with increases held to the rate of inflation for the next four years;

“Whereas the Ontario fair hydro plan would provide people with low incomes and those living in rural communities with even greater reductions to their electricity bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Ontario fair hydro plan and provide relief for Ontario electricity consumers as quickly as possible;

“Continue working to ensure clean, reliable and affordable electricity is available for all Ontarians.”

I sign this.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's very unusual to be heckled while you're doing a petition, but you've taken it up a notch.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas community care access centres (CCACs) are the designated placement coordinators under the Nursing Homes Act (NHA), Charitable Institutions Act (CIA) and Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act (HARHA), and are therefore required to comply with the relevant provisions of these statutes and their regulations; and

“Whereas Ontarians must stay on lists for access to long-term-care facilities for lengthy periods of time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To review the procedures presently in effect in the NHA, CIA and HARA in regards to admissions to long-term-care facilities to include legislation that would account for those that should remain on the list but can presently stay at home for an indeterminate amount of time without the person being bumped down to the bottom of the list or have to go through the lengthy application process again.”

I agree with this petition, sign my name to it and hand it over to page Matthew.

CHILD CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have petitions that come from all over my riding. I'd like to thank Mr. Ken Annett from Wahnapiatae in my riding. It goes as follows:

“Whereas the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 commits Ontario to ‘a system of responsive, safe, high-quality and accessible child care and early years programs and services that will support parents and families, and will contribute to the healthy development of children’;

“Whereas recent community opposition to Ontario's child care regulation proposals indicates that a new direction for child care is necessary to address issues of access, quality, funding, system building, planning and workforce development;

“Whereas Ontario's Gender Wage Gap Strategy consultation found ‘child care was the number one issue everywhere’ and ‘participants called for public funding and support that provides both adequate wages and affordable fees’;

“Whereas the federal government's commitment to a National Early Learning and Child Care Framework provides an excellent opportunity for Ontario to take leadership and work ... on developing a universal, high-quality, comprehensive child care system...;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to “undertake a transparent policy process with the clear goal of developing a universal early childhood education and child care system where all families can access quality child care programs” that “publicly declare ... universality, high quality and comprehensiveness.”

I fully support this petition and ask Franny to bring it to the Clerk.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: “Whereas Cambridge, Ontario, is a municipality of over 125,000 people, many of whom commute into the greater Toronto area daily;

“Whereas the current commuting options available for travel between the Waterloo region and the GTA are inefficient and time-consuming, as well as environmentally damaging;

“Whereas the residents of Cambridge and the Waterloo region believe that they would be well-served by commuter rail transit that connects the region to the Milton line, and that this infrastructure would have positive, tangible economic benefits to the province of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Direct crown agency Metrolinx to commission a feasibility study into building a rail line that connects the city of Cambridge to the GO train station in Milton, and to complete this study in a timely manner and communi-

cate the results to the municipal government of Cambridge.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my name to it and send it with page Ethan.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Bill C-14, the federal legislation which legalized medical assistance in dying (MAID) in Canada explicitly affirms it is not intended to compel anyone to act against their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has adopted the effective-referral protocol for MAID, which may compel health care professionals to act contrary to their deeply held beliefs; and

“Whereas the effective-referral protocol for MAID is globally unprecedented; and

“Whereas there are viable alternatives for the provision of effective access to MAID that would allow all health care professionals to continue to practise with ethical integrity; and

“Whereas this effective-referral-protocol policy may compel health care professionals to make a dehumanizing choice between their profession and faith, conscience or commitment to the Hippocratic oath;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately take action to protect the conscience rights of Ontario’s health care professionals by nullifying the effective-referral protocol for medical assistance in dying.”

I support this petition. I’ll send it to the table with a page.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AMENDMENT ACT, 2017

LOI DE 2017 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Ms. Hunter moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes / Projet de loi 92, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2014 sur la négociation collective dans les conseils scolaires et apportant des modifications connexes à d’autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Ms. Hunter.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I rise again in support of proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014. These proposed amendments will, if passed, strengthen bargaining in Ontario’s education

sector. Specifically, Mr. Speaker, they will make the act more flexible, transparent and consistent. These proposed amendments, if passed, will build on an already successful piece of legislation, one that has served as a clear and effective governing framework for challenging discussions.

The act, which came into force in 2014, facilitated the return to a strong, respectful and collaborative partnership between the government and its education sector partners. In doing so, positive outcomes for school communities across the province were achieved through the landmark 2014 to 2017 collective agreements.

As positive as the results were, it was always understood there would be opportunities to improve the act going forward. That is why our government committed to a review of the legislation following the first round of bargaining under this new framework. I am proud to say that we have followed through on our commitment by extensively consulting with our education sector partners over the past year, including teacher federations, education workers and trustee associations. The engagement process began in the spring of 2016 and continued through fall 2016 and winter 2017. Collectively, we considered what worked and what could work better in the future.

I would like to thank all of our partners for sharing their feedback on the first round of bargaining and for their ideas on refining the bargaining process while maintaining the core of what all parties agree is an important and effective piece of legislation. I also want to thank all of those who participated in the committee process, including our partners, who respectively presented their ideas to the committee, and our committee members, who listened, engaged and carefully considered the various perspectives. Thank you.

Based on these consultations and informed by our partners’ input, as well as issues raised by the Auditor General, we are proposing amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act that will, if passed, enhance this already successful bargaining framework. Specifically, the proposed amendments include:

—ensuring parents and students are well informed in advance of labour disruption by requiring an additional five days’ notice for strikes or lockouts in certain circumstances. This is in addition to five days of notice already included in the act;

1540

—requiring trustee associations to report on their use of public funds received, including bargaining costs and salaries for labour relations employees exceeding \$100,000, as a means to improve transparency;

—ensuring that all education worker unions are able to participate in central bargaining so that central issues such as salary remain at the central table where the parties are able to address them on a consistent basis across the province;

—supporting improved consistency and fairness by ensuring that new bargaining units formed during the term of a collective agreement receive the central terms

negotiated by its applicable central teachers' federation or education workers' union;

—allowing the government, or the applicable employer bargaining agency, to receive updates on the status and progress of local bargaining and for the crown or employer bargaining agency to assist with local negotiations, upon request, as a way to support improved transparency and consistency;

—granting the central parties with the ability to file an application with the Ontario Labour Relations Board to resolve perceived conflicts or inconsistencies between central and local terms;

—changing language from “consent” to “mutually agree” in certain areas where trustees and the crown engage in joint decision-making; and

—allowing collective agreements to be extended to support improved flexibility and stability for all parties, including students and parents.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly about why this last amendment is particularly important. With the 2014 to 2017 agreements set to expire this summer, we have entered into discussions with our partners to build upon the gains we made in Ontario's education system and to continue to give students the best educational experience possible. These discussions, which were collaborative, respectful and productive, resulted in tentative two-year agreements for 2017 to 2019 with Ontario's teacher and education worker unions, which will allow all parties to stay focused on what matters most: our students.

These very important extension agreements are conditional upon the passage of proposed amendments to the act. The proposed amendments are intended to improve flexibility, transparency and consistency.

Bargaining premised on clear roles and mutual respect allows all parties to reach agreements that support the critical goals of student success and well-being.

Although negotiations are never easy, we must continue to promote and foster positive labour relations in Ontario's education sector through respect and collaboration. Ultimately, those who will benefit from improving the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act are Ontario's two million students and their families, all of whom rely on a strong, stable and sustainable publicly funded education system each and every day.

Mr. Speaker, as I stand before the House today, once again asking my colleagues for their unanimous support of these important proposed amendments—and later you will hear from my parliamentary assistant, MPP Granville Anderson, who will expand on the importance of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act—I thank all the members of this House for the very valuable input and debate on this very important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the Legislature to speak again to Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act—and I do so for the official opposition, as the associate

critic for education and critic for post-secondary education. Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation that impacts the collective bargaining process between the government and those who work in the education sector.

The late American president John F. Kennedy once said the following concerning education: “The goal of education is the advancement of knowledge and the dissemination of truth.” This is a quote that is as timeless today as it was in the 1960s, and will continue to be relevant so long as history is studied. After all, today's students are tomorrow's community leaders, so it's up to us to listen regularly and carefully to students, parents and teachers to learn how we can help put in place the elements that lead to successful outcomes in the schools across our great province.

Speaker, as you know, I and my colleague take our critic roles in monitoring this government's stewardship of the education system very seriously because we understand the value that education can bring to our society. However, I think it's important to begin today by recounting the history of what caused the government to table this legislation in the first place.

Let's go back to November 4, 2015. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts passed a motion to have the Auditor General review the cost of collective bargaining since 2008. This was in response to criticisms that the government was spending taxpayer funds inappropriately, without any accountability or sufficient oversight.

Ultimately, the Auditor General made six recommendations last year to the government. Bill 92 is the response to that report, and barely addresses any of the Auditor General's recommendations. The recommendations were as follows:

“When launching a major provincial initiative that impacts external stakeholders, the Ministry of Education should ensure that a transparent policy and legislative framework is in place before the major initiative is launched.”

Two: “To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of two-tier education sector bargaining in Ontario, the Ministry of Education should complete its review of the 2014-15 central bargaining process and the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014, and implement needed changes.”

Three: “In order to avoid future perception concerns about the Ministry of Education's funding of education sector unions' bargaining costs to advance negotiations, the ministry should consider ceasing this practice.”

Four: “Working with school boards, the Ministry of Education should, in an open and transparent manner, regularly assess how professional development in the education sector can best be delivered and align the funding according to the results of this assessment, ensuring accountability mechanisms are in place.”

Five: “The Ministry of Education should assess the merits of providing funding to education sector unions for purposes other than professional development outside of the collective bargaining process.”

Six: “The Ministry of Education should:

“—amend the method of providing funding ... for the transparent disclosure of payments to school board trustees’ associations...;

“—put in place accountability and control mechanisms to ensure funds ... are used for the purposes intended; and

“—ensure that eligibility periods in transfer payment agreements do not unnecessarily overlap.”

Speaker, at the time that the report was released, the minister and senior Ministry of Education staff agreed with each of the Auditor General’s recommendations, which is why we were surprised to see that when the government tabled Bill 92, the legislation did not include measures to address each of the six recommendations from the report. But we remained hopeful and looked forward to Bill 92 being examined more closely at the Standing Committee on General Government. Understandably, my colleague and I saw this as an opportunity to remedy this bill’s shortcomings and include as many of the Auditor General’s recommendations as could reasonably be accommodated.

During the committee’s meeting earlier this week, most of the suggested amendments to this legislation to accommodate the Auditor General’s recommendations were proposed by the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, not the government. Now, what is clear, Speaker, is that the government’s earlier commitment to honour the Auditor General’s recommendations has been superseded by expediency and, no doubt, preparations for the upcoming provincial election.

1550

Notwithstanding the government’s efforts related to the Auditor General’s recommendations, many of the government’s proposed amendments in the standing committee were largely housekeeping measures. Within that context, it raises some questions, the foremost of which is why the changes in those amendments were not included in the bill when it was first tabled here in the Legislature. The government submitted a total of 17 amendments to Bill 92, many of which were measures to clarify or fix clauses in the bill that, in our estimation, were drafted improperly. It raises the question, quite legitimately: How could the minister sign off on such an incomplete bill? This demonstrates just how flawed Bill 92 was from the start. Understandably, this concerns us greatly, considering that the government motioned for time allocation so quickly on this bill.

However, as with all bills that pass through this House, the members of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus did scrutinize Bill 92, and we suggested ways of improving the bill to the benefit of the students, parents and teachers of this great province.

The standing committee heard from several groups, each representing a different group of educators or employees in the school system and each with unique complaints about Bill 92 as it was drafted. However, what each of the witnesses at the committee meeting shared was that they felt that they had not been fully consulted on Bill 92 or that the consultations were simply window dressing for the Ministry of Education.

For example, the committee heard from the president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Ontario, Fred Hahn, and Terri Preston, who chairs CUPE’s school board workers co-ordinating committee in Ontario. I’d like to quote Mr. Hahn’s comments regarding this government’s consultations on Bill 92. This is taken directly from Hansard on the standing committee’s proceedings. “We think consultation could be done in a much fuller way, a much more open way and a much more direct way. That said, here we are with a proposed piece of legislation that we think has embedded in it some very real problems.”

The committee also heard from the president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, Paul Elliott, who echoed Mr. Hahn’s sentiments. Again, taken directly from Hansard, he said, “I think the way it was done and the hurried-up way that it appears to have been done to get this legislation through is a bit of a problem too. I think that it wasn’t a true consultation...”

Witness after witness criticized this government’s consultation process on Bill 92. However, the problems with Bill 92 are not limited to the government’s consultation process. When the committee began to consider the proposed amendments to Bill 92, we became concerned over this government’s priorities. As the associate critic for education, I, along with my caucus colleague, proposed three key amendments to Bill 92:

(1) to ensure that the costs, quality and effectiveness of professional development programs for teachers were evaluated and that training programs reflected teachers’ experiences;

(2) to ensure that any funds required to cover the costs of collective bargaining would not be paid for by pulling resources out of the classrooms of Ontario students and teachers; and

(3) to ensure that the Auditor’s General recommendations from the report on Government Payments to Education-Sector Unions would be included in Bill 92.

I would add that the government committed to each of the recommendations from the Auditor General’s report when it was first tabled.

Taken together, these amendments were focused on financial accountability and transparency, ensuring that our students and teachers have the resources they need to learn and do their jobs. How many of these amendments did government support? None; not one. It’s clear where this government stands, particularly on financial accountability and transparency. Increased accountability in our education framework and, by extension, the government at large, is something all taxpayers would clearly benefit from.

In closing, the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus supports some provisions in the bill, even allowing for the fact that the government voted down our amendments to increase transparency and accountability in the Ministry of Education. In particular, we support giving the Ministry of Education some flexibility in the length of collective agreements, giving teachers more time to focus on students and less on what is happening at the

negotiation table. We particularly support the measure that gives parents additional notice and more time to plan for their children's needs in the event of a strike or lockout that affects their community.

At the end of the day, we welcome those measures that potentially would have a positive impact in the lives of those that they would most affect: students and their parents. However, we are concerned—very concerned—that this government's commitment for the cost of collective bargaining to be net zero could potentially pull resources out of the classroom. As the government voted down our amendment to ensure that they would not do so, it clearly concerns us.

We recognize that a significant part of improving the condition in teachers' workplaces is providing them with the resources necessary to ensure that all of their students can thrive and succeed. Education is a public good. Efficiency should not come at the expense of quality.

I've mentioned in this House before that my daughter is an early childhood educator with the Durham Catholic school board. I know that she and many others in the education sector go to work every day to do what small part they can in shaping the minds of their students and preparing them for the world that awaits them.

I mentioned this earlier, but I believe it bears repeating: Today's students are tomorrow's community leaders. It's up to us, all of us in this Legislature this afternoon, to listen regularly and carefully to students, parents and teachers to learn how we can help to put in place, together, the elements that lead to successful outcomes in the schools across the great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 92 today, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, for third reading.

This bill is very much connected to the history of how I actually came to have this seat in this Legislature. We're going all the way back now to June 2012, when the original piece of legislation was brought into this House: Bill 115. We are still reeling from the negative impact of this government imposing Bill 115 on this place, which, at the time, the Progressive Conservative Party did support. It's worth noting the repercussions of poorly crafted legislation and the negative impact it has on the province. We have a flawed piece of legislation before us in Bill 92. I'll go into some detail as to how completely flawed it is.

1600

But first, I do want to pay my respects to the member from London West, Peggy Sattler, who served on the Thames Valley school board for well over a decade. She served as one of the vice-presidents at the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. I know her to be an ethical, principled education activist and advocate who favours research and evidence in the creation of legislation and policy. I know her to have worked with this government with the shared goal of trying to ensure that this piece of

legislation, Bill 92, would be about making sure that families and kids have stability in the classroom—end of story, full stop. She entered into this process with this government in good faith.

Along the way, though, it did not take long for her to experience what normally happens in this majority government setting. There is the charade of public consultation, where the government goes out and pays lip service to consultation, to active listening. Really, at the end of the day, it needs to be stated in this House that when this government continues to go through the charade of public consultation and not honour the goals of that consultation, it compromises confidence in public engagement and in the engagement in our democracy and undermines our democracy. It builds cynicism across this province for all of us.

I think our education partners came to the table also in good faith, because we have to get collective bargaining straight in the province of Ontario. And to hear the minister describe this bill as creating some flexibility, as an effective tool for collective bargaining and a transparent document—the disconnect between the reality of what this legislation does and the lived experience of what will happen in the next round of bargaining—the disconnect is so far from reality that we have to mention it. Then, she also regarded the last round of bargaining as “landmark” results. I would challenge her to find any education stakeholder across this province who would describe the last collective bargaining round as “landmark” results.

There's a reason why Bill 92 had to come to the floor: There was chaos in the education system, and it goes all the way back to Bill 115. This is a government that is committed to continuing to follow through the same cycle of, really, surface changes to collective bargaining. It all comes down to how destructive Bill 115 was originally.

We should remind ourselves how bad Bill 115 was. It removed the right to collective bargaining, and it removed the power and responsibility from democratically elected local school board trustees: “School board trustees are elected by the people and charged with the responsibility of running local schools. Among their responsibilities is to accept or reject collective agreements negotiated with education federations. This act”—Bill 115—“removes that power from those democratically elected trustees and gives it solely to the Minister of Education.”

This is the history of this Liberal government. Bill 92 does not fix the broken trust, the breach of trust, which happened when Bill 115 was brought to the floor of this Legislature, and which was supported by the Progressive Conservative Party.

Bill 115 also brought broad and sweeping power to the Minister of Education, giving power to one minister over every school board—the 72 duly elected school boards in the province of Ontario. Bill 115 restricted and produced deadlines which were unilaterally imposed by the Minister of Education. It encouraged the removal of rights

under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. This act gave the Minister of Education the ability to override certain rights under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, including the right to strike or lock out. Although very rarely exercised, the right of educational workers to strike and the right of school boards to lock out its employees are legitimate steps that assist the parties in reaching local agreements.

This is the history. These were rights that have been fought for in the province of Ontario. It needs to be stated that those unions brought in pay equity. They brought in workplace safety conditions. They addressed the gaps in educational services across the province, and they brought those concerns to this House and to successive governments. With Bill 115, they were unilaterally shut down—shut down. At the time, of course, there was one seat difference between a majority government and a minority government, and it was this seat at the time, the seat of Kitchener–Waterloo, because my predecessor had left.

The politics were the most cynical kind of politics we've seen, I think, in that if the government could secure the one seat and earn the majority, then the gas plant documents would not be exposed, and the government could continue on their own political agenda. What happened was a beautiful thing—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How did it work out for you?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The story ends well, I have to say. People flooded the riding of Kitchener–Waterloo because they told the Premier of the day, at that time, Dalton McGuinty, that their rights and their riding and their support could not be bought. It was a beautiful thing. It was democracy in action, and you can see how excited I am about it.

It's unfortunate that we are here in this place and that these lessons have not been learned by this Liberal government. Even the amendments that were brought forward by the member for London West, someone who knows the education file I would say better than anyone on that side of the benches—three major amendments were brought forward—all of this, of course, is time-allocated because you don't really want democracy to play itself out in a timely manner, in a respectful manner and respecting the voices of the people who were consulted along the way. You wouldn't want that to happen in this place.

Three amendments shot down by this government—first, to return central bargaining to being optional. There is this feeling out there—and there will be some court challenges—that forcing central bargaining is a violation of charter rights. So this government is content to spend more of your money in the courts.

The second piece was to remove section 20(9.2), part IV, which empowers the Ontario Labour Relations Board to force an existing council of unions to accept into its membership another trade union—another violation.

The final one was to remove section 16(4), which creates a requirement for the submission of an additional five days' notice in respect of certain job actions. This is on top of the five days already required.

What we have here is a flawed piece of legislation in which, for no particular reason, the government decided to throw in a number of other divisive and contentious amendments that may actually create problems and completely undermine the process going forward.

We're not going to support something that will spark a fight between the unions and the government and further destabilize public education in the province of Ontario. We will proudly be voting against this legislation, and we will fix it in the not-too-short future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I wish to thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure for me to join my honourable colleague Mitzie Hunter, Ontario Minister of Education, in supporting the amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. In doing so, I would like to carry forward her thoughts on the proposed amendments as essential tools in the ongoing maintenance of positive and constructive labour relations in Ontario's publicly funded education system and the benefits of those positive relations to all of our students and their families who look to the education sector to provide a stable learning environment focused on achievement and well-being.

The Minister of Education already provided many reasons for all parties to stand in support of the proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I support that wholeheartedly because it keeps our kids in school, it gives them an opportunity to learn where they belong, and it gives our teachers an opportunity to have continuity, and continuity in the whole education process. That's what this is all about. This is about putting our students first. That's what this bill does: It puts our students first. That should be paramount on all sides of this House.

1610

In my view, a key motivation for all members to rise in support of these proposed changes is that the House will, in effect, also be approving two additional years of labour peace and stability in all of our Ontario publicly funded school system. You know, we may criticize the bargaining process, Mr. Speaker, but it's really important to know that these teachers' unions and unions of all sorts that represent our publicly funded school system have agreed to an extended two years. Obviously, it's not all bad, the way our bargaining system works in Ontario. We want to maintain that stability. That's why this bill, Bill 92, came forward in this House.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear, I'm not speaking in an aspirational manner, but in very practical terms. I am speaking about the proposed amendments to the act that would permit extensions, as I alluded, to existing collective agreements.

The 2014 to 2017 agreements with Ontario teachers and educational workers were monumental achievements at balancing the needs of the sector with the fiscal

realities of our province. With those agreements set to expire this summer, we entered into early discussions with our partners to build upon the gains we have made in Ontario's publicly funded education system.

Our goal, as is the goal with respect to any collective agreement, was to reach an agreement with our partners that promotes stability in the sector, is consistent with our fiscal plan and achieves positive results for students and those who work in the education system. To that end, Mr. Speaker, we have worked with our partners, our trustee associations, including the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, OPSBA; the Ontario Catholic school board association, OCSTA; and our French school boards and associations. We have reached a tentative agreement to extend, by two years, the 2014 to 2017 collective agreements with all of our associations.

I think that's really what it's all about, bringing that stability to one of the greatest publicly funded systems anywhere in the world, bar none. We want to keep it that way. These agreements allow us to do that and to focus on the education of our students and make sure they get the best possible start in life. That's what Bill 92 proposes to do.

The Ontario Council of Educational Workers—these are all groups that have signed on to the two-year extension. Most of these extension agreements have already been ratified by our teachers and educational workers, and I will preface that. They have been ratified, Mr. Speaker, by our teachers and educational workers, an additional two years of continuity and stability within our system. That means we don't have continuous bargaining, and our teachers and our parents and families can focus on their students getting the best possible education. That's what this is all about, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I'm standing here in this House, because it's paramount that we prepare for our future and make sure our students have the ability to reach their full potential.

What stands between Ontario students and two years of peace and stability is passage of the proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. If my colleagues are willing to stand in support of the proposed amendments, they will be standing up on behalf of Ontario students and their families. They will be allowing the sector to remain focused on what matters most, which is our students, and to build on the gains we have made in Ontario's publicly funded education system.

When we talk about gains, I'm talking about the highest graduation rate in the province's history, strong literacy and reading results, and equipping students in the 21st century with the skills and knowledge they need in our rapidly changing world. This is important because there is a tremendous amount of work ahead of us. Passing the proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act will allow us to focus on the many tasks at hand.

Because the proposed amendments are based on our extensive consultations with our partners, passing them into law will further promote positive labour relations

and partnerships with the sector. These partnerships will be more important than ever in the weeks and months ahead.

As the world gets more competitive and globalized, and technology becomes more and more integrated with people's lives and livelihoods, we are tasked with the continuous evolution of publicly funded education to match that pace of change. Accomplishing this takes more than investments; it takes collaboration predicated on partnership, respect and common goals, such as those stated in *A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, which are achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being and enhancing public confidence.

The proposed amendments to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act will, if passed, result in improved flexibility, transparency and consistency. They're refinements to an existing law that has already demonstrated its merits and earned its place as a foundational document upon which the ongoing success of our publicly funded education system will be determined for years to come. As such, it is essential to continue to make improvements as we go forward to reflect the needs of the sector while ensuring the ultimate beneficiaries are Ontario's students.

With great respect for all my colleagues in this House, I ask for your unanimous support in passing these proposed amendments, thereby securing two-year extensions for teachers' and educational workers' collective agreements, while enhancing the overall flexibility, transparency and consistency of the act.

The House has an opportunity today to effect positive change in Ontario's publicly funded education. During line-by-line amendments, we listened to my colleagues across the aisle. I know my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa has some concerns about accountability for what we are going to be doing, and I assure the member that no money will be removed from classrooms to fund collective bargaining in this province. That's an assurance. We have listened to the member, and we take his accountability to his constituents and to the people of this province seriously. I thank him for his support.

I know he'll be supporting this bill, along with his colleagues. It's the right thing to do. I hope the third party would also join in and support this bill, because it's a great bill. It's great for all our students in Ontario, it's great for our teachers, and it's great for the whole education sector.

I encourage everyone to seize this opportunity and help us make a difference for our partners and, most importantly, for our students, because our students should be paramount in all of this. At the end of the day, they are our future, so let's all support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair.

I'm pleased to add my voice to third reading of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Amendment Act, Bill 92.

First things first: I want to commend my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa. I really admire the tenacity with which he applied his thorough research and thoughtful amendments to this bill to make it better on behalf of students, teachers and parents in Ontario. Coming from a family that has three teachers in my immediate family, education is very important to me, as it is to everyone throughout the province.

1620

I want to start by saying that there are some very good components of this legislation that will improve how collective bargaining for educators is carried out in Ontario. It's so important to do everything we can to keep teachers and students in the classroom. When I say that, I have to give a shout-out and tell the teachers in Niagara that I appreciate receiving their notes and I feel for them being locked out of their classrooms, but we were trying to do our best from an opposition perspective to minimize that type of negative impact that I was hearing about in the emails I've been receiving from teachers in the Niagara area.

I must say, from an opposition perspective and with regard specifically to Bill 92, we're proud to give support to and recognize the importance of giving more flexibility to employers and employees by allowing them to extend their collective agreements by two, three, four or even five years. When an agreement is working, it is common sense to make it as easy as possible to renew a deal and keep Ontario's next generation learning. It's all about keeping those students in the classroom.

It is also important to recognize the importance of transparency for taxpayers. This bill has a component that requires trustee associations to be added to the sunshine list.

Finally, part of this legislation deals with work stoppages, which we all recognize is an absolute worst-case scenario. As I mentioned before, I thank the teachers who have been reaching out and sharing their thoughts as they adjust to and deal with their particular situation in the Niagara area.

It can be a very stressful time, not only for the teacher and the student but for the parent as well. First, they have to accept that their child's education will be put on hold due to a dispute beyond their control, but on top of that they need to find supervision and hopefully something that will provide educational value for their children during what should normally be school hours. Most importantly, it is stressful for students, who have learning interrupted in the middle of a term, when reinforcing new concepts is critical to their success.

We're very pleased with the measures in Bill 92 that give parents additional time to prepare for school closures due to labour disputes. Additional time to prepare can mean more time to ensure that a child will be minimally impacted by the work stoppage and perhaps can continue to do activities of educational value during that particular stoppage.

Problems still remain, Speaker. I have to tell you, I couldn't help but notice, while we were in committee on

Monday afternoon, a disturbing trend with this government. Again, they're rushing through legislation and then proposing a barrage of amendments to the bill at the committee level to fix their mistakes.

As I mentioned, I was reminded of what the government did almost a year ago with regard to trying to clean up the mess they made with Bill 172. Amendment after amendment was introduced to Bill 172 because the government knew they got their initial piece of legislation wrong. They took committee efforts to get it right. It just shows how disorganized and out of sync this particular government of the day is.

Monday was the first day of spring, but it felt more like Groundhog Day because yet again we saw this same government using a similar tactic for Bill 151, the Waste-Free Ontario Act. In this particular case, the intent of Bill 92 is to roll up more power into the hands of one person: the Minister of Education. It reminded me of Bill 151, where it too has put too much control into the minister's hands. We tried to put a stop to it.

Over and over, this government seems to roll power into the hands of people that we may not trust. This is a troubling pattern.

I want to get back to Bill 92 because we also introduced amendments that would make the bill better, but unfortunately this government voted every single one of them down. It was shameful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm glad to have another opportunity to speak on government Bill 92, the amendment to the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Here we are in third reading, meaning that this bill has already had its time in committee. As we've heard today from different members about the committee process, it shouldn't come as a surprise to you or any of us that it wasn't the process that we would have hoped for. Our colleague from London West put forward thoughtful amendments, and they were all shot down, which we're realizing is just kind of par for the course here in this Legislature, and disappointing, because as we've talked about on this side of the House, we put forward thoughtful amendments that don't just come from us but come from our stakeholders and our communities. And here we stand again, saying, "Oh well, this government decided against them, so who cares, right?"

We're talking, though, about education, and I've learned that everybody cares about education. What we're willing to do about it, though, is what sets us apart.

I believe that we all want what's best for our children. Certainly, when you spend time in this House and you listen, everyone is saying the same thing: We want what's best for our children. We want all of our children to have a stable education, a predictable education. We want what's best for our kids and for their future, right? However, what we're seeing is that that isn't necessarily being prioritized.

They're great talking points. I was listening to the comments from the government, from the minister and

from the parliamentary assistant, the member from Durham. If I had a dollar for every time that I heard the words “flexibility” or “stability” or “consistency” or “transparency,” we could probably afford to keep schools open in the province. And you know what? That’s great. Those are really pretty words, but I want to hear about action. I don’t just want to hear the words. Stability, stability, stability: We know what that word sounds like. What on earth does it look like?

When I’m hearing from parents, when I’m hearing from community members, when I’m hearing from educators—and when you hear from kids directly—we do not have stability across the province. We do not have predictability. We have pockets of stability, but we do not have consistency across the province, and that is a problem. It is a problem because all of our children, whether living in northern areas, rural areas, in downtown Oshawa, in cities, in our suburbs or anywhere in between—all of those children have a right to achieve their full potential and have an appropriate learning environment.

Back to focusing on the bill: This was about allowing contract extensions. When education partners were in agreement that they wanted to be able—or to talk about being able—to extend the contracts, it had to be a legislative fix. Fine. That’s why we’re here, and that’s what was supposed to be accomplished in the bill.

But all of the other bits and parts that the government kind of tucked in there, that were divisive and that are being criticized by different education groups—there was no need to tuck them in there. Streamlining a process is one thing, but forcing labour groups to come to a table—imposing their will—that’s a problem.

When I hear the member from Durham say, “That’s what this is all about: putting students first,” I almost break out in hives, because putting students first, the Putting Students First Act, was that pretty little label for Bill 115. My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo is here because of that “putting students first” pretty-little-labelled bill; so am I. I was one of the teachers caught up in that and kicked in the teeth by the Liberal government of the day. A bunch of us rallied, because it was unconstitutional and it wasn’t fair. And here I stand, supported by my community, because it wasn’t right and it wasn’t fair. And we’re having similar conversations again.

Then I got to be in the room when they threw Bill 103 at the education community. I stood in this House and fought against them as they talked about “protecting the school year.” That was just sending teachers back to work who had every right to protest. It was, again, not right and anti-democratic, but here we stand.

1630

Talking about the state of our schools, I have such different conversations in my riding with the parents and community members and educators who come through our doors, who call us. I have such different conversations than I imagine the Minister of Education is having. When she talks about giving students the best education

and collaborative, respectful and productive discussions and a strong, stable and sustainable funding system, I think, my goodness, are we talking about the same system? Because I’m hearing from people—and I would encourage her and her office to pick up the phone, answer the calls and then take action.

I’m going to go in a different direction than I was originally planning. I’ve got a letter here from a teacher, and I’ve got just enough time to get some of this on the record, so let’s do that. She is a kindergarten teacher, by the way, in my area. She said, “Something has to change. Our educational system is in need of a change. A change to allow those who are less fortunate to have the same opportunities, supports and rights to a good education as those in wealthy or in the mid-to-upper-middle class. Our school systems right now do not support this....

“In our Oshawa ... schools there is great need. Great need for extra special education resource teachers, educational assistants, extra administrators, facilitators, mental health and social workers. Canada is a ... beautiful, strong and wealthy country that has knowledge, opportunity and resources, but we are not getting the support needed in these ... city, northern and rural schools....

“Teachers are taught to educate, not deal with mental health.... We just do not have the training.... It is not a safe work environment. If the Ontario government investigated they would find that” many “classrooms are in violation of the health and safety practices of our safety-in-the-workplace-rights. The system has not changed for a long time. Its secrets are being hidden and things are being swept under the rug. Either no one wants to deal with them, no one knows how or, people in the power to make change are not making the changes necessary to do what’s best for our schools. This is an issue for all elementary schools as a whole across Ontario. It’s time to listen. It’s time to make positive change. Hear our voice. We are crying. We are shouting. Come see what is happening....

“Special educational ... teachers are so busy dealing with students who have incidents, that they aren’t even able to do their job and help identify students with special needs. Principals and vice-principals are so busy with dealing with large issues of incidents and behaviour that the smaller incidents like code of conduct, swearing and vandalism are not usually dealt with and then the morale of the school falls apart....

“The reality is that students need help. They need structure, guidance and support from local support systems that are trained in our areas. I am pleading with you. I am begging you, please look inside our schools. There is a hidden mess that is about to burst, because administrators have to listen to the board and the board needs the Ontario ministry to put a new plan into place to change our old methods of handling things. Our old methods have done nothing for us as of late, except made the violence in the schools increase and make our schools more unsafe for students to learn and teachers to teach....

“We need to do something. Not later. Now.... Keep our schools safe, embrace your education system.... Give

it your attention, because it's been left alone too long and there are issues, and we need to make sure our future education system is one we can be proud of. Help!"

That was one email of many. I have consistent issues in my riding: One is hydro bills, and another one that I'm recognizing is a theme is violence and unpredictability in our schools. I'm hearing it all through the community. We've asked the government about Kevlar in our classrooms; we haven't heard a thing back. They talk about a system that is so rosy and full of sunshine and promise—and I'm glad; I want the same thing. I taught in our education system for over a decade. I want that for our kids. That's what we think we have. But when we delve and we look into different pockets and we actually listen to people, there are problems to solve, not just problems to ignore.

So here we are, talking about collective bargaining. We're talking about a bill where this government once again threw a couple of things in the mix that weren't helpful. If they're going to talk about education, I wish they would actually put pieces in that are helpful. We need strong collective bargaining, absolutely. But I'm worried about this government's vision. I keep thinking that they're trying to pull that power, suck that power to Toronto and make decisions for our communities across the province. I hope that's not the case. I hope they continue to work with our boards, with our communities, with our education partners and actually listen—not just listen to themselves, although, Lord knows, they like to do that, but to really engage our broader communities, listen to our parents, talk to our students, find out what they need, and maybe another time we can talk about appropriately funding our education system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Second call for further debate? Third call for further debate?

Seeing none, Ms. Hunter has moved third reading of Bill 92, An Act to amend the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014 and make related amendments to other statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

Those opposed, please say "nay."

The ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe we have a deferral. Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 28, they request the vote be voted on after question period tomorrow.

Third reading vote deferred.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Resuming the debate adjourned on the motions for concurrence in supply for various ministries and offices as represented by government orders 4 through 12, inclusive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We left off with the NDP on the concurrence debate from this morning. Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in the House to participate in this debate on the concurrence of the Standing Committee on Estimates. This is an important part of our budget process and the process of the management of the province's fiscal resources. A number of ministries were reviewed through estimates and, of course, the estimates were all found to be in order, and now we are proceeding with this debate in the House and, after it, we'll be passing the Supply Act to ensure that there's final statutory authority given for the spending that has been done in accordance with our 2016-17 budget.

This is a really good time to review where we are in terms of the province's finances. For the eighth year in a row, we'll be exceeding our budget deficit reduction targets. We've improved on our budget target by \$2.4 billion and, for 2016-17, there will be an approximately \$1.9-billion deficit, the lowest deficit in eight years. Of course, we know that the significant deficits that occurred were as a result of a global recession where Canada and Ontario were not as badly hit as some other countries and jurisdictions, and Ontario actually has led the way in getting out of that dire consequence with very good job creation and very good growth in our economy. In fact, this year, Ontario's economy is projected to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the G7.

We know that this government's actions to control our spending and our deficit have been successful. One of the ways they've been successful is through the program review, renewal and transformation process which has been undertaken through Treasury Board and the various ministries, where a very detailed line-by-line review has been taken of all the government spending, to find areas where savings can be achieved, efficiency can be achieved and to ensure that spending targets are achieved or exceeded—exceeded in a positive sense, Mr. Speaker—and that we achieve what we want to achieve, hopefully spending even less than we thought we would need.

One example that comes to mind of this being a very effective process is in the area of post-secondary grants and tuition. Through that PRRT process, the government looked at the various programs that were available to fund post-secondary tuition and grants and, through combining a number of programs, finding efficiency, there will be over 100,000 post-secondary students who will pay no tuition, whose tuition will be free. That is an example of very sound fiscal management—sound fiscal management that drives efficiency and generates much better results for taxpayers; in this case, for those Ontarians who want to pursue post-secondary education, and certainly for their families.

1640

Part of this government's effective management of our finances has also been taking steps to ensure that our economy can grow, that those who want to innovate and

grow and invest in Ontario have the ability and the confidence to do so.

Ontario continues to be the leading jurisdiction for foreign direct investment in Canada. That means capital is coming into Ontario to invest in our resources, both human and natural, to grow our economy, to help Ontario export our products and services and our knowledge to other provinces, to the United States and beyond. Our economy is becoming more innovative, more nimble and more knowledge-based, and that's the result that we're seeing in our growing economy.

Of course, a growing economy also means growing government revenues, which is one of the reasons why our deficit situation is also improving, because we are sound managers not just of our own finances but of the economy overall.

Mr. Michael Harris: Tell me you don't believe that.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I hear some chuckling from across the aisle, which brings to mind some of the major investments in infrastructure, certainly public transit infrastructure, in communities like Kitchener–Waterloo, where previous governments ignored the need to build and invest in new infrastructure.

Our government's plan to spend \$160 billion in infrastructure over the next 12 years is not only sound leadership for the province, but it's assisting communities across this province in becoming more resilient and more able to attract investment to allow those businesses in those communities to become more efficient, and to get their products and services to market more efficiently and more quickly. That is very important.

It's also making a positive impact on the day-to-day lives of Ontarians by giving us all more time with our families and less time stuck in traffic. That situation is only going to improve over the coming decade as we build light rail in Kitchener–Waterloo, in Hamilton, in Ottawa, in the city of Toronto, in Mississauga, in Brampton and other communities across this province.

These strategic investments in infrastructure and targeting the right strategies to attract more private investment are the basis of the sound fiscal management that is building a very strong budget for Ontario, a budget that the Minister of Finance and the Premier are committed to bringing in as a balanced budget in the coming days.

Ontario is on the right track. The estimates that were reviewed over the course of a number of months at committee demonstrate how this government is managing the finances of the province well and ensuring that those finances are applied in way that benefit Ontarians in all walks of life and make Ontario a more prosperous province for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim McDonell): The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I look forward to the opportunity to chat for a few minutes. We'll start with the real facts. I think that's important.

We heard earlier today—this morning from the President of the Treasury Board and we just heard some

other information here. What we didn't hear were some real, solid numbers that, sadly, are going to be contrary to the numbers we've just heard from the members opposite. These numbers come from people like the Financial Accountability Officer and others.

Let me start with the fact that, despite the picture that's painted by the members opposite, including the President of the Treasury Board this morning, Ontario is the most indebted subnational government on the planet. We owe more money than any other organization on the planet.

So let's talk about some of the reasons for what's happening to the economy here in Ontario. We can start with the Chamber of Commerce. They used to produce—for five years, actually, they produced a document called *Emerging Stronger*. It was all about—it was very aspirational and very fact-filled with where Ontario would be and how we're coming out of this funk that the Liberals got us into. But finally, this year in the 2017 report, it's no longer called *Emerging Stronger*. They have acknowledged that we are not emerging and we're not stronger. In fact, our numbers are worse, as you'll hear in a moment. They've changed the name to Ontario Economic Report for 2017. That's the new title of the chamber's report.

The most stunning revelation was that only 24% of businesses in Ontario have confidence in the province's economy.

Some of the reasons why, Speaker: If you look at foreign direct investment—now, I know the government continues to tell you one thing when the opposite is true. They tell us we're the number one foreign direct investment location in North America. Well, that, Speaker, is not true. Foreign direct investment in Ontario dropped this past year from \$7 billion to \$4 billion. Ontario's market share has been cut in half, from 12% in 2015 to 6% in 2016. That's according to the fDi annual report of 2016. That's reality, not the spin that we heard or the talking points that we heard.

Private investment is set to decline 0.7% in 2016, with an 8% drop projected for the manufacturing sector. That's from the Financial Accountability Officer's Ontario business investment document.

Business investment in the province declined by 0.8%, including a drop of nearly 6% in investments in machinery and equipment. That's from Ontario Economic Accounts. That's from the Ministry of Finance in their third quarter of 2016.

When we talk about the increased taxes that this government has burdened the people of Ontario with, \$2.74 billion in revenue came from service fees in 2016–17. That's a 38.7% increase from just five years previous. That is the rate of tax increase that this government has. In fact, the driver and vehicle registration alone, in four years—now I'm talking about just the increase, Speaker—is \$503 million. That's not the revenue; that's just the increase in driver and vehicle registration in the last four years. That's the kind of thing that we're seeing from this government. That is the reality of what we're faced with here in Ontario.

In the estimates, we heard—the ones I'll focus on today will be finance and energy. If there's time, I'll do a little bit of talk about health and education, but there's a lot to talk about in terms of finance and energy as well.

We heard in the news that the Minister of Finance continues the announcement that he is going to balance the budget. Well, that's not what the Financial Accountability Officer, the independent officer of Ontario, says. Certainly, Speaker, we're going to bust this down a little. We're going to break that down and look at the numbers.

The Financial Accountability Officer, in his Economic and Fiscal Outlook, states that, this year, we will have a budget deficit of \$2.6 billion in 2017-18. That's the same year that the government says they're going to balance. I am going to talk about why they are going to suggest a balance and the fact that we will announce it as a—*it's a fake balance; it's an artificial balance.* The Financial Accountability Officer is pretty clear about that as well. He says they won't balance; it's a \$2.6-billion deficit, and he expects the budget to remain in deficit over the next five years, steadily deteriorating to \$3.7 billion in deficit by 2021. What he's talking about, compared to what the finance minister is talking about, is a real deficit. Technically, we call it a structural deficit. That means that we are continuing, today, to spend more money—real money—than we actually are taking in, in true revenue.

1650

Now why they're going to have this artificial budget balance is alarming to anybody who follows this, but it's very alarming to the accounting world as well, because what they are doing is, they are taking one-time revenue, like the sale of the LCBO—

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: There's no sale of the LCBO.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —the most recent sale of the LCBO headquarters, the sale of OPG headquarters across the street here—these hundreds of millions of dollars in the sale of those LCBO and OPG assets, a one-time sale—and they're including that in general revenue. Those sales aren't going to reoccur every week and every month to bail them out, as they're using this money to bail them out.

While that in itself is alarming, the most alarming sale is of Hydro One and how they're accounting for that money. It's a bit technical, and they wanted it that way. They wanted this to be awfully technical and awfully confusing for everybody. But what they are doing, Speaker, if you looked last year when we received the bill, Bill 144—it is a 167-page finance document. Inside, it is chock full of information: 167 pages of things about horse racing, tobacco, municipal affairs. It's got it all stuck in there.

But if you're very careful and not too bored and get to page 162, with only five pages left to go, you'll find one sentence, Speaker, one tiny little sentence on page 162, schedule 22, section 7, item (1)—here we go. This is what the government can do with the sale of Hydro One assets. Here's what they can do: They can use the money "to reimburse the crown for expenditures" relating to the

construction or acquisition of infrastructure. This tells us that while they say we've got, and we heard it a few minutes ago, \$160 billion in infrastructure—except now this \$9 billion in the sale of Hydro One, \$5 billion toward the loan repayment and \$4 billion into infrastructure. They say that they can use that money to put into the budget, pay the infrastructure with the billions they get from it. The money that was already budgeted, they can now pull out and use that to lower the deficit.

We've all seen through this. This is why when they announce this budget balance, it will be artificial because it's relying on the billions from the sale of Hydro One. Well, that's not going to reoccur in the next couple of years. We're done. In fact, I was quoting from my Focus on Finance; it's called "Burning the furniture to heat the house." That's what they've done. They're going to run out of furniture to burn to heat the house.

It worked so well for them. It worked so well for them that they're doing it again. They're playing precisely the same game with the cap-and-trade revenue. It's a little more complicated, but they're using the revenue from cap-and-trade to pay for already-budgeted-for items—and then use those previously earmarked funds to lower the deficit.

Here's how they've done it. Once again, they buried the real meat at the end. This one is a 56-page bill. If you go to page 47, jump over to page 55, just before the back cover, and then back to 47, you'll see what they have done.

Schedule 68, subsection (2), paragraph 2: This is the purpose of what they can spend cap-and-trade money on. "To fund, directly or indirectly, costs relating to initiatives...."

Then, in section 3, subsection (ii), they tell you what the initiatives are: active transportation infrastructure; public transit vehicles and infrastructure; and technologies, infrastructure, vehicles, buildings and structures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with the movement of goods.

Subsection (3) then says it all—one sentence. They're allowed to reimburse the crown for expenditures, directly or indirectly, for purposes that we just described.

That's what they've done. The climate change minister insists they can't legally subsidize or build a highway, except that the bill, which he obviously didn't read, clearly states that the opposite is true.

We're going to see them come up, in the weeks ahead, with an artificial balance. But it does nothing, absolutely nothing, to truly balance the budget. They have a structural deficit that the Financial Accountability Officer has shared with us.

I want to jump to the energy sector for a bit.

During the pre-budget consultations, we heard from many, many groups. Craig Wright, the senior vice-president of Royal Bank and their chief economist, said, "I think electricity is one of the many areas that makes Ontario investment less attractive than only a short while ago."

He was backed up by Maple Leaf Foods. They told the committee that "our electricity price ... increased by 18%

in 2016.” He went on to say that “it would have been a 65% saving on our electricity bill, if we had operated in Manitoba instead of Ontario.”

Then Food and Beverage Ontario weighed in about the skyrocketing electricity prices: “We’ve had enough. We’re starting to look at the alternatives south of the border.”

Frank Dottori is the CEO of White River Forest Products and a couple of other forest companies in northern Ontario. His quote: “Most jurisdictions use energy costs to promote economic development, not to kill jobs, which is what we’re doing in Ontario.”

Speaker, this is exactly why we’ve seen Ontario’s foreign direct investment drop to fourth place in North America. This is why we’ve seen a 6% drop in investments in machinery and equipment. And where does that leave us all? You know, you worry.

I’m going to read an email from Mark in my riding:

“Good afternoon Vic,

“I see the Wynne government is trying to boost their popularity in the polls with this recent hydro rate decrease. Vic, unfortunately the high rates do not just affect small businesses and residential consumers. As” his company name “is not considered a small business by the Ontario government standard we are stuck footing the bill again for the Liberal governments outrageous mistakes. Vic, I am telling you with all sincerity that if medium sized companies like” the name of his company “are not offered the same discounted rates there will be job loss and closure on what is the backbone of Ontario. I can tell I have dropped my work force by more than 30% as I cannot produce my product and be competitive and have lost market share.

“Furthermore my business and my family are starting to look for life outside of Ontario....

“Please voice my complaints and concerns loudly to the Ontario Liberal government who has so little respect” for “those entrepreneurs who strive to create work and a decent living for Ontarians.

“Please let me know if there is any options” for “medium size businesses ... for hydro relief.

“Regards,

“Mark D.”

This is where we are. I’m going to close with a very quick story before I hand it over. This is the story of the Ontario that the Liberal governments have created, and Kathleen Wynne has created, for our families.

1700

There is a person in my riding who spoke to us who could not pay their natural gas bill—it was cut off—and who can’t afford hydro, so they have a tiny little space heater. Speaker, this is the Ontario this government has created. This person shovels snow into their bathtub and uses that little heater to melt it so that they can have a bath at night.

That’s the Ontario that has been created by Kathleen Wynne and this Liberal government. On that story is how I will end my comment on this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Speaker. I know I’m standing in a peculiar spot. I’ve got to get in your peripheral, so here I am.

Today we are discussing concurrence for the 2016-17 fiscal year, and we are certainly having some very interesting if not varied information being shared today. As you know, it is required for all ministries and offices that have been selected for review by the Standing Committee on Estimates. For this fiscal year, the committee selected nine ministries and offices for review, and I’m pleased to speak on behalf of the Ministry of Transportation, as I serve as the parliamentary assistant to the minister.

When we introduced our 2016 budget, we put the focus on creating jobs, growing our economy and continuing to help people in their everyday lives. That’s why the 2016 budget was titled Jobs for Today and Tomorrow.

When we look at the economic trends today, it is clear how far we have come. Our unemployment rate is down to 6.2%, which is the lowest in 10 years. We also just passed seven straight months of job growth—that’s a number we haven’t seen in 14 years—and we’ve created over 700,000 net new jobs since the recession. Of those net new jobs, 95% of them are full-time, with the majority in the private sector. Taken together, Ontario has been leading the G7 in growth for the first three quarters of last year, and we’re leading Canada in foreign direct investment.

While we should rightly be proud of this leadership role, we cannot take our foot off the gas, if I can use that metaphor, or we might allow global competitors to overtake us. Our plan is working to keep Ontario a leader. We must keep moving forward.

One of the major ways that we are moving forward is our investments in critical infrastructure. We’re moving Ontario forward by building tomorrow’s infrastructure right now. This is being accomplished by investing more than \$160 billion over the course of 12 years.

In a few years, many Ontarians will have an easier commute, thanks to our investments in Moving Ontario Forward. Our plan includes an investment of \$55 billion in public transit infrastructure over 10 years. An example of what this actually looks like on the ground: In my community of Waterloo region, in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, this is going to mean new LRTs and expanded GO Transit services.

In Waterloo region, our LRT is going to be getting an investment of \$300 million from the province. The project is about 95% built. We just have to get the trains on the track when they arrive and get them going.

We are investing \$26 billion in highways over 10 years. This includes a new Highway 7 that’s being built between Kitchener and Guelph. That’s coming in at a price tag of \$11.8 million.

We are building and repairing roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure. We are improving and constructing

highways, including expanding the 401 between Kitchener and Cambridge—that's under way right now, going from six to 10 lanes—and the 407 East extension and the expansion of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound.

Also in my community, I'd like to add that the province is committed to fully funding a new \$43-million transit hub in downtown Kitchener. This is going to be built at the corner of King and Victoria, where the LRT is going to intersect with GO trains.

These major investments are going to help manage congestion, connect people and improve the economy and Ontario's quality of life.

On top of that, these investments are expected to support over 110,000 jobs per year on average. I want to take a moment here to consider the magnitude of these infrastructure investments. Our highways and transit systems are equivalent to a circulatory system. They keep our economy and our people going. They're very much the lifeblood of Ontario. Through the crucial investments that we're making, we are rejuvenating the major arteries of our transportation networks that keep our people and our economy vibrant.

Just think of the benefits to our automobile industry, which relies on just-in-time delivery of parts to manufacture the vehicles that we drive and which employs so many people in this province. The benefits of a great transportation network extend to all businesses in Ontario that rely on delivery of products and being able to predictably ship their products to the rest of Ontario and beyond. Highways and rail systems connect our businesses to each other and to the world.

For working Ontarians, having highways and transit services to get them to and from work makes commuting smoother for them, and it allows people to spend their time more efficiently. They can work and provide for their families and themselves, whether they're living in Waterloo region, Hamilton, Toronto or Windsor. Improved transit can help moms and dads take their children to the Waterloo Region Museum or help us get to a Senators game in Ottawa. Should I mention the Toronto Maple Leafs? Is anyone a Leafs fan? Yes? It will help you to get to a Leafs game or to see the Toronto Blue Jays.

Our highways let us travel from one end of this great province to the other to see the sights that Ontario has to offer, from Sleeping Giant Provincial Park near Thunder Bay to Algonquin Park. Investing in moving Ontarians makes sense because it's an investment in our economy and our communities. It brings us together and has a direct impact on all of our lives.

Our fiscal plan in the last year has resulted in significant advancements for Ontario. We are leading the G7 in economic growth, and employing thousands of people in this province. This very sensible management, including investing in Ontario rather than cutting, is benefiting the province as we come away from the financial crisis of 2008-09. It's also positioning us at the head of an intensely competitive global economy.

This plan is driving economic development and growth across Ontario. In holding this debate today on concurrence in estimates, we're laying the groundwork for the supply bill that, if passed, will authorize our spending plan for the last year that has made much of this growth possible.

Speaker, I urge all the members to support concurrence in estimates so that the spending on important public services outlined in the budget can be approved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm happy to speak on behalf of the Ontario PCs—the opposition party, of course. You know what? I couldn't help but perk up when I heard several of the members speak about—and I heard buzzwords like “good financial stewards” and “fiscal responsibility.” I'm just not sure if I'm in the right place or not. I know I don't see all that well, and I was kind of looking to see if perhaps, maybe, they had their fingers behind their backs, because surely they don't believe that; surely they don't.

After—what?—nearly 15 years, there's a \$300-billion debt. That's not financial stewardship or leadership; that's a disaster. A billion dollars a month in interest payments here in the province of Ontario: That's a disaster. When we talk about what potentially we could be utilizing \$1 billion for in the province of Ontario—unbelievable.

I want to get back to reality here with the 13 minutes I have left. I had an opportunity to sit on the estimates committee last year. I've had several opportunities to be a member of the estimates committee. They seem to enjoy my membership on that committee, and I thoroughly enjoy it. Obviously, it's a great opportunity to speak to concurrence in supply, following our extensive deliberations on the estimates committee.

The estimates committee provides an opportunity for us legislators to perform one of the most fundamental of our responsibilities as the government seeks consent on its annual expenditures. The committee is responsible for reviewing the estimates of at least six but not more than 12 ministries or government offices each year.

1710

It's a great responsibility, and yet when I think back to the days, weeks and months during which we took on that responsibility, I'm left wondering if it's all worth it when the ministries we review fail to provide us answers they should know on questions we have a duty and responsibility to ask.

Specifically, I think back to the hours we devoted to considering the Ministry of Transportation and the long list of questions we asked again and again, to which there were no answers. Actually, to be completely honest, on many of those questions there was actually an answer, and that answer is, “I'll take it back.” That's all we heard. A minister of the crown comes to committee, a lot of people surround him, a lot of deputies, staff resources—the place is full—and the only answer we heard from the minister, in this case, was, “I'll take that back.” At least

10 times during committee questions I was told that by the minister, to pertinent questions that he should have been prepared to answer, questions specific to the estimates his ministry had submitted.

Penalties for Bombardier—the member for Kitchener Centre talked about LRTs in the province of Ontario, hoping that they'll eventually come to communities to be put on tracks. We asked, due to the significant delays for some of these LRVs, what were the penalties to Bombardier? "We'll take it back."

Burlington GO station renovation—a three-year delayed completion date? "We'll take that one back as well. I don't have a new date with us right here, but we'll take that one back. I can't recall if we've already publicly disclosed, so forgive me for that one, but we'll take that back," the minister said.

What about the Kenora winter road maintenance contract amount, I asked. "I'll take that one back" too. What's the length of that contract? "We'll take that one back as well."

Sudbury winter road contract? "I'm going to have to take that back."

The monthly passenger ridership numbers for the UP Express? "We can take that back, yes." That was the answer.

The number of riders using discounted promotional fares on the UP Express—any guesses?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Take it back?

Mr. Michael Harris: "We'll take it back."

The estimated cost of the Union Station train shed renovation, Speaker? "I would have to take that back." That was the minister's answer.

Speaker, the repeated non-answers from a minister of the crown on questions directly related to his ministry's estimates and expenditures got so frustrating that I eventually had to ask, "Minister, where are you taking it back to?"

I proposed perhaps asking the committee Chair if we needed to take a 20-minute recess—20 minutes to possibly go somewhere in Queen's Park with his comprehensive staff to get properly briefed on these things that he should have already known when he came to committee, because wherever it is that the minister was taking it back to, that location seems to have a lockdown on what should be available information on our ministry's expenditures of our tax dollars here in the province, and that's what's so troubling. These are public tax dollars the government is spending and planning to spend, and yet when we get to committee to ask questions about those expenditures, we're told that they have to take it back.

As I told the minister at committee, I was extremely disappointed. This is the estimates committee where we review the estimates of ministries. I was asking very simple math questions about significant contracts. In fact, I told the minister that he should be taking this committee more seriously. Of course, given the fact that he's not the only minister who went silent after indicating that they'd have to respond at a later date, I was thinking that's a message that needs to be heard by this entire government.

As I indicated to the Minister of Transportation after another non-answer on winter maintenance, "We're here to ask estimates questions of your ministry. You've brought a lot of your staff here today...."

"I think that Ontarians would be embarrassed to know that their minister and the bureaucrats who work at the ministry have not come" properly "prepared...."

"We ask ministers and their staff to come. This isn't programming; these are number questions that you should have the answers to. You should have the answers."

You know what? They didn't have the answers, not that day—that was on May 4—not the next week nor the next month.

More troubling than the initial arrogant brush-off is, once they take it back, they never get back to responding. It's like they're taking it back to a black hole where our questions are never heard from or seen ever again.

We see it time and time again from this government that has become too entrenched in their ministerial ivory towers to see past the fact that this is not their money they are spending; it's taxpayers' money. Taxpayers darned well deserve to know how their money is being spent. Yet we get arrogance, attitude and delay when we ask questions, because they actually think it's their money that they're throwing around, and that they have no duty, no responsibility, to report the details of those expenditures.

That's why, as of today, close to a year after my asking questions and being told he would take it back, the minister has yet to get back to me on any of the outstanding questions he refused to answer all those months ago.

Just to be fair to the minister, I wanted to ensure that my office hadn't missed the response. Perhaps it was lost in the mail. Maybe they were using one of the member for Scarborough's postage stamps that the mail people no longer recognize, and it possibly didn't get to my office. Perhaps it was.

So we checked with the Clerk of the Committee, Eric. Of course, Eric was part of the protocol here, and now he's into the committees, and he does a fine job. He's a great addition to committees. The truth is, Speaker, there were no responses at my office because no responses were ever sent to committee members whatsoever.

Well, I shouldn't say that; it's not completely true. I do note, Speaker, that the Ministry of Finance did follow up and respond to one of the hundreds of questions that the committee saw left outstanding at the end of our hearings. Here's to the Ministry of Finance for taking the time to answer one question, on the increased aviation fuel tax that is sending frequent flyers down to Buffalo for cheaper fares.

The committee members will tell you we received a series of follow-up reports from the committee, indicating all the outstanding questions members had asked that had yet to be answered.

Again, committee staff did a great job in recording our questions. Yet despite the continued updates, there was

never any follow-up to acknowledge those questions or provide responses by the ministry, of course, save for the one question on aviation fuel tax. Zero responses from the Ministry of Transportation, and zero right on down the line, through health, energy and education.

So in the interests of reminding government as to the responses we're still awaiting, I wanted to take a few minutes to ask them again. Perhaps this time, with Hansard and staff and those watching on the television, they may be able to perhaps get back to us on a few of these.

Please, if there are any government members who wish to actually step up to the plate and provide the insights we've been denied, I welcome them to address these questions when they have a chance to speak today.

Let's revisit some of our outstanding questions on health.

Our critic, the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, met with much of the same inability to receive actual answers on key estimates questions, so again, they are outstanding. I'll ask again.

He asked, "How much of the \$44 million in annual base funding for Behavioural Supports Ontario is allocated to help the long-term-care residents in general?" Question asked; no answer.

What were the lottery revenue allocations for hospital operations for 2014-15 and 2013-14?

At what age do hospital employees lose their benefits?

What is the total compensation cost of the upper-level staff at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—deputy, associate deputy, and assistant deputy levels—including benefits?

1720

Can the ministry provide a chart showing the percentage increases to hospital budgets from 2008 to 2012?

Can the ministry provide the total budget for CCACs from 2008 to 2012?

How many projects have been funded through the health technology innovation evaluation fund?

How much was spent or paid for through pharmacies and clinics for the methadone program last year?

Can the ministry provide the total number of people employed by the ministry? Surely, somebody has got to have a head count over there.

Can the ministry provide the administration costs associated with the Exceptional Access Program, as opposed to the costs of the program itself, for this year and last?

Can the ministry provide the total amount of money spent on drugs through the Exceptional Access Program for this year and last year?

Can the ministry confirm how many private paramedic services are affected by Ornge's use of public paramedic services for non-urgent transfers without a contract?

Can the ministry confirm the number of contracts between Ornge and private transportation companies across the province for non-urgent transfers?

Again, any time the government wants to get back to direct questions as to how they are spending our money, it, of course, would be appreciated.

While we're talking about health, I'm still awaiting responses to a handful of questions I asked relating to rare disease treatment, questions like: When will the report dealing with the national strategy on rare diseases be made public? How much of the public drug program was spent on rare and ultra-rare diseases for the last couple of fiscal years? What is the projected cost for funding all orphan drugs for patients with rare diseases in Ontario?

My colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is still wondering when the ministry will tell us, besides the \$10 million committed in the budget, how much of the \$44 million in annual base funding for Behavioural Supports Ontario is allocated for long-term-care residents. And what is the total funding shortfall for long-term care? All questions asked and yet not answered.

Again, I question, what is the point of estimates if the minister is not going to respond—ever—to specific questions related to the spending of our tax dollars? It was the same song and dance experienced by my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who I hear is coming in very shortly, when the Minister of Energy joined the committee hearings. Who knows? Maybe today is the day the minister will get back to us on answers to outstanding questions he had, like: How much has been paid to clients under the Ontario Electricity Support Program since its instruction? How much money has been spent by all entities in the processing of OESP applications in addition to the consulting fees? Did the consultants recommend a processing time faster than six to eight weeks? The list goes on and on.

Let me say that as we debate concurrence on estimates, I feel that the continued lack of accountability and transparency and refusal to address direct questions on government expenditures only further fuels concern with the priorities of this government when it comes to the spending of Ontario taxpayer dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. James J. Bradley: I see I have one more member who will want to speak as well.

I am always interested to hear what the opposition has to say when they're in opposition, because, having been in this House for a few decades, I can tell you what they were like when they were in government, when they faced the realities of government. To hear members of the official opposition today get up and talk about spending money—they were the people whose number one plan during the last election was to cut spending on behalf of government. Some 100,000 jobs, for instance, were to be eliminated. So I find it very rich now to listen to them.

I find it particularly intriguing to hear them talk about government advertising—I heard that in this afternoon's debate—because I can't recall the leader of the official opposition ever challenging his party leader at the time,

the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, for the money that was spent on the economic action plan of the government—advertising it, not the money spent on the plan. I have the pamphlets from way back, when the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's father was in the House, the kind of propaganda pamphlets that were being put out by the government of the day back then. And now I hear them complaining about it. It's a bit rich to hear that at this point in time.

I also want to say to my friends—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. James J. Bradley: I want to say to my good friends in the New Democratic Party, when they come forward with suggestions—I keep asking the question: Are you prepared to raise taxes to do what you say you would like to do? The cat has their tongue whenever I say that. They cannot tell me that they're prepared to raise taxes, because if they were, I would compliment them and say, "You know something? You're being upfront. You say government should be making all these expenditures and you're prepared to raise taxes." I'm waiting for that to happen.

There are decisions one has to make on priorities. One of my favourite books—you no doubt have read it, Mr. Speaker—is one called *Minding the Public Purse*. It was written by Dr. Janice MacKinnon, who was the NDP finance minister in the Romanow government in the 1990s. At that time, they were faced with some reorganization that was needed in terms of hospitals, and 52 rural hospitals were closed by the NDP government. This was a pro-health-care government, to be fair to them. I mean, if you mention Roy Romanow, that is a person who would be on the lists of people who really promoted health care in this country and deserves a lot of credit.

It wasn't because they wanted to be mean or they were right-wing ideologues. It was because there was a necessity, as things were changing in Saskatchewan. I always, as I say, still say great things about Roy Romanow and what he has to say, even when he disagrees with perhaps what our government might be doing from time to time.

One other thing I wanted to mention, as we talk about estimates—and this is non-partisan: I am looking forward with a great deal of anticipation to hearing Ontario MPs of all political stripes actually stand up for Ontario, because you see they go to Ottawa and the leaders of each of the parties say to them, "Well, you know, you must be a Canadian first, and an Ontarian second, when you go to Ottawa." So the Liberals, the Conservatives, the New Democrats who go to Ottawa, they become Canadians first.

Meanwhile, the MPs from the Maritimes, from the west, from Quebec and from every other place in Canada are busy advocating on behalf of their provinces, while our MPs are there to say, "We're Canadians first, and perhaps Ontario can be more benevolent." Well, Ontario has been benevolent over the years. As a result, we don't

always have as much money as we believe we should, each of our parties over the years, through the equalization process and other allotments.

I could go on at some length, but I know that my colleague from Kingston and the Islands would like to add her comments to this afternoon's deliberations, and so I will yield the floor to her, when you deem that appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do also want to thank the member from St. Catharines for his comments. It does give me cause to bring to the floor something that has come to me from one of my constituents, Mr. Dan Couture, who watches the debate in this House every single morning and every single afternoon. One of the things that he has brought to my attention is—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew is extremely playful today. He is throwing little articles around the chamber. Don't do that. Don't do that again.

Continue.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I do want to just make note that there are constituents out there who are watching this debate and who are paying attention. The member from St. Catharines has brought our attention to the fact that MPPs should be talking about what's happening in their ridings. There are always, always good things to report about what is happening in each of our communities. So I'm mindful that when we talk about the concurrence in estimates, it's important to bring forward some of those positive points.

I am very happy to rise and engage in this debate, approving the government spending for this past fiscal year, ending on March 31, 2017. As the parliamentary assistant to both the Ministry of Children and Youth Services as well as the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, I want to take the time to talk a little bit about the impact of the 2016 budget on both of my ministries.

1730

For MCYS, our government has always put forth that they want to make it easier for families to find the services they need to give kids the best start in life. They want to make this province a place where all children and youth have the best opportunities possible to lead successful lives.

We have seen steps towards that goal. More than 121,000 children and youth were served in 2015-16 by our community-based child and youth mental health agencies.

As a result of the Tele-Mental Health Service, almost 4,000 children and youth in remote and rural areas now have access to consultation services. I can tell you that in Kingston and the Islands, through the Kingston General Hospital, they have telehealth services that they are

providing to indigenous communities in the north. I'm very proud of the work that they are doing.

Youth leaving care now have more support as they transition into adulthood. I know that the Family and Children's Services of Frontenac, Lennox and Addington is doing a tremendous job. In 2015-16 we provided support to more than 2,800 youth leaving care through the Youth-in-Transition Worker Program. We're providing additional funding to caregivers, like foster parents, who provide residential stability to youth in high school between the ages of 18 and 21 years old. It's those transition periods that are so very, very difficult.

In 2016-17, MCYS supported First Nations and urban indigenous partners through a \$4.5-million investment in community capacity-building, in an effort to lay the groundwork for ongoing youth life promotion and suicide prevention.

Our government is also partway through providing \$3.1 million to deliver Promoting Life-skills for Aboriginal Youth, or PLAY. It's a program from Right to Play, along with a partner community.

I think it's really important to make sure that we remember, as MPPs and as representatives for our constituents, to focus on the good work that is being done in our communities. People in our ridings are listening. So be proud of the work that is going on in your communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time is up for debate.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Finance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes tomorrow.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

Those against, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote has been requested. This vote will be taken during deferred votes tomorrow.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I didn't hear a no. Carried.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I said—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's carried.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House—

Mr. John Yakabuski: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I heard a no. All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be taken during deferred votes tomorrow.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew will behave. That's not necessary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm sorry, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, I'm sorry—I did not hear a no. And the member will not challenge the Chair.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will not challenge the Chair again.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education, including supplementaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

The ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes tomorrow.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. Is it the pleasure of the House—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I did that; I'm sorry—Office of Francophone Affairs.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, only we can make mistakes, I guess.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Please.

Ms. Sandals has moved concurrence in supply for the Office of Francophone Affairs. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be taken during deferred votes tomorrow.

Votes deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has moved adjournment of the House. Shall the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those against will say "nay."

Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1737.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Seniors Affairs / Ministre des Affaires des personnes âgées
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Des Rosiers, Nathalie (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough–Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Minister Responsible for Small Business / Ministre responsable des Petites Entreprises
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Mileczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Minister of the Status of Women / Ministre de la condition féminine Minister Responsible for Early Years and Child Care / Ministre responsable de la Petite enfance et de la Garde d'enfants
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Sault Ste. Marie	

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Sophie Kiwala, Michael Mantha
Peter Z. Milczyn, Arthur Potts
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Wayne Gates, Amrit Mangat
Cristina Martins, Sam Oosterhoff
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
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Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Monique Taylor, Daiene Vernile
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Robert Bailey, James J. Bradley
Joe Dickson, Sophie Kiwala
Harinder Malhi, Michael Mantha
Monte McNaughton, Laurie Scott
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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des comptes publics**

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Bob Delaney, Vic Dhillon
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Randy Hillier, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Jennifer K. French, Jack MacLaren
Ted McMeekin, Lou Rinaldi
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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John Fraser, Amrit Mangat
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Lou Rinaldi, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch